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The Catholic University of America
Anthropological Series No. 15

# THE GROS VENTRES OF MONTANA:
## Part I
## SOCIAL LIFE

BY
Regina Flannery

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1953

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# THE GROS VENTRES OF MONTANA:

## Part I

## SOCIAL LIFE

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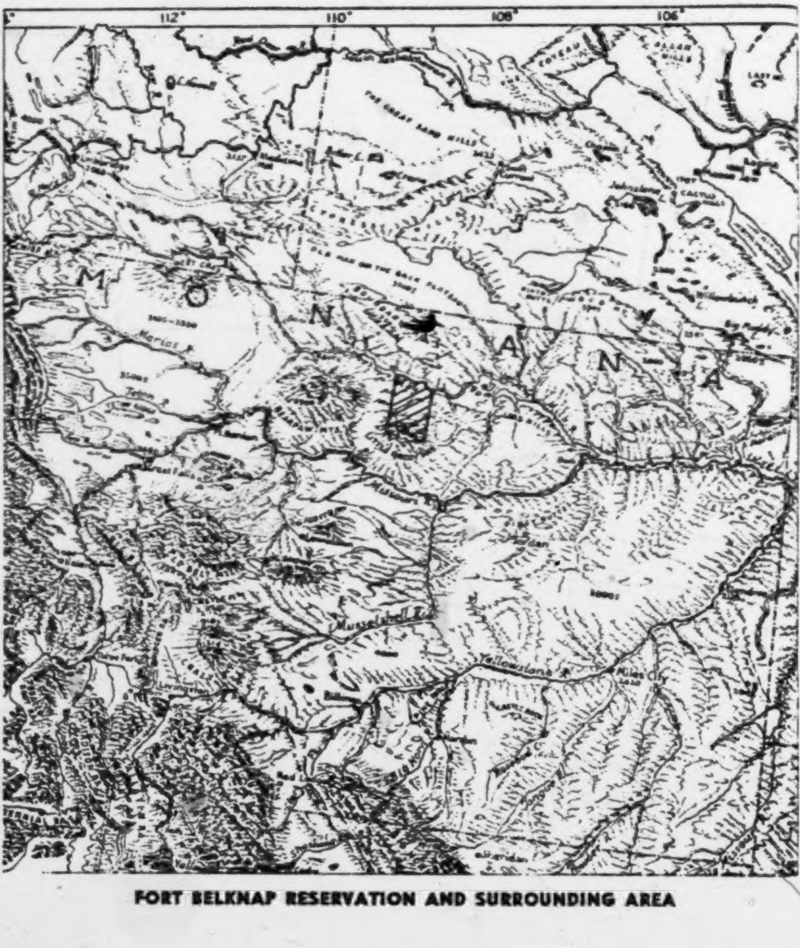
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FORT BELKNAP RESERVATION AND SURROUNDING AREA

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
ANTHROPOLOGICAL SERIES No. 15

# THE GROS VENTRES OF MONTANA: 000

## Part I

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## PREFACE

121 This reconstruction of Gros Ventre life as it had been lived before the disappearance of the buffalo around 1884 is the result of a joint undertaking. When the late Dr. John M. Cooper visited the Fort Belknap Reservation in 1938, he met there a group of older men who were interested in having him cooperate with them in the making of a record of their "old way of life." The project was then undertaken and continued by Dr. Cooper in the summers of 1939 and 1940. It was upon the invitation of the Gros Ventres that I went to the Reservation in 1940 to work with the women and to deal mainly with matters other than the religious aspects of their culture. Pressure of other duties, combined with ill-health, prevented Dr. Cooper's return to the field after 1940, but the taking of the record was subsequently continued by me in the summers of 1945 and 1948.

128 The results are presented in two parts, Part I on Social Life is the more general, giving a background for Part II which deals exclusively with Religion. The writing of Part II had been practically completed by Dr. Cooper at the time of his death in 1949; it will appear as a separate volume under his name.

It is my privilege to thank all of the Gros Ventres who cooperated in the taking of the record. In 1945 and in 1948 preliminary drafts of the material were checked and revised in the field. In spite of all precautions it is not unlikely that some errors may remain. For these the Gros Ventres themselves are in no way responsible. The onus, especially for any misrepresentation of the Gros Ventre point of view, must rest entirely on us.

122 While Dr. Cooper financed his own field work, I am indebted to the Charles and Grace E. Lastner Fund for part of my field expense in 1940 and in 1945, and to the Research Fund of The Catholic University of America, for the grant which enabled me to return to the Fort Belknap Reservation for the summer of 1948.

000 To the School Sisters of St. Francis, who at no small inconvenience to themselves accommodated my husband and me at St. Paul's School, we are deeply grateful. We wish likewise to

acknowledge the kind hospitality of the Jesuit Fathers who invited Dr. Cooper to stay with them at St. Paul's Mission.

Permission was granted for us to print a portion of Dr. Erwin Raisz' map, Landforms of the United States, which accompanies W. W. Atwood, Physiographic Provinces of North America, Ginn and Company, 1940. Mr. Richard Pohrt kindly provided photographs of Gros Ventre specimens in his private collection, reproduced here as Plate 3. The picture reproduced as Plate 1 was loaned by The Boy.

Regina Flannery

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
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# INTRODUCTION

The Algonquian-speaking Gros Ventres live on the Fort 131
Belknap Reservation in North Central Montana. The Reservation 657
is a small part of the land claimed by this tribe in 1887, when the [197]
boundaries were finally fixed. At present, the Gros Ventres number
between a thousand and eleven hundred, and they share their [161]
territory with almost as many Assiniboine. The latter tribe was
included in the settlement of the Reservation although it did not [648]
participate with the Gros Ventres and Blackfoot tribes in the
Treaty of 1855. In spite of some intermarriage, the two groups
have never really blended and the Gros Ventres tend to center at
the village of Hays at the southern part of the Reservation while
the Assinboine are clustered around Lodge Pole, a settlement some
ten miles east of Hays. The Indian Agency is approximately
forty miles north of Hays at the northern boundary of the Reservation
and close to the town of Harlem on the Great Northern
Railroad. Of importance to the Gros Ventres, who are predominantly [797]
Roman Catholic, is St. Paul's Mission and School
which lie at the foot of the Little Rockies only a mile south of
Hays. David Rodnick has given an excellent description of the [114]
geographical setting of the Reservation for his study of modern
conditions and of acculturation among the Fort Belknap Assiniboine.

Of the several tribes in the Northern Plains region, the Gros 101
Ventres are perhaps the least known. Although they maintained
intact their tribal identity, and were recognized as fierce warriors, [648]
they were often mistakenly identified with the Blackfoot tribes,
with whom they were frequently allied. Moreover, little was known
of the Gros Ventre language except that it was an exceedingly 197
difficult one; practically every independent observer during the
nineteenth century remarks on this fact. Since, however, many
Gros Ventre men knew Blackfoot, the linguistic difference was
often overlooked and the Gros Ventres tended to be counted as
one of the Blackfoot tribes. As part of the so-called "Blackfoot [648]
Nation," leaders of the Gros Ventres signed the Treaty of 1855.

[P. viii contains no text]

114 Although the Gros Ventres are mentioned with sufficient frequency in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth century sources to enable us to trace some of their movements and history, information on their culture is disappointingly meager. There is nothing in the sources on the Gros Ventres, for instance, that is in any way comparable with the richness of Thompson's account of the Piegan. The only real knowledge we have had of Gros Ventre culture is from the pioneer ethnological investigations of Professor Kroeber. In his Ethnology of the Gros Ventre, published in 1908, Dr. Kroeber deals with material culture and outlines the political, social and religious organization. He gives excellent illustrations of such objects pertaining to industries, to recreative, and to ceremonial life, as were still in the hands of the Gros Ventres at the turn of the century. He devotes considerable time to a detailed comparative treatment of decorative art, and in a separate paper deals with Gros Ventre Myths and Tales. Dr. Kroeber's major field work in 1900-03 was devoted to the Arapaho and in his monograph on this people he refers occasionally to his Gros Ventre data, especially, for instance, in the section on kinship terminology.

128 While the present ethnographical account deals primarily with Gros Ventre culture of the nineteenth century, as does Dr. Kroeber's Ethnology, the emphases are somewhat different. In Part I, for instance, we have found it possible to extend what Dr. Kroeber dealt with in several pages on social customs into a number of chapters dealing with aspects of the life cycle and kinship behavior. We have attempted to inject a chronological aspect through our detailed treatment of Gros Ventre history, but our sections on political organization and on war lack the lengthy firsthand statements by individuals which makes Dr. Kroeber's account so valuable. In Part II, we have been able to add vastly more detail on religious life than that presented by Dr. Kroeber. In our material, the Flat and Feathered Pipe rites are emphasized as well as personal supernatural powers. Furthermore we have presented the versions as told by our informants of the tales and myths pertinent to a given area of religious life. Some of these show variations on those published by Dr. Kroeber, and some are new.

124 Dr. Cooper worked with the Gros Ventres in the summers of

**2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953**
**NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13**

1938, 1939, and 1940. The group of older men, who wanted a record of their old way of life taken down, emphasized the religious aspects of their culture. The Boy gave the largest portion of information on this subject. He is now about eighty years old and had been interested ever since he was a young boy in the native culture of his people. His father, Lame Bull, was a deeply religious man and had been a Keeper of the Flat Pipe. From him and from other old men The Boy acquired an enormous body of knowledge which his excellent memory retains. Thick, who died in 1951, and (John) Charles Buckman, who died in 1949, were contemporaries of The Boy and made substantial contributions to the record. Among still older men than these three were Stiffarm, Iron Man I, Joe Assiniboine, Turn Toes, Jim and Philip Shortman, all of whom gave additional information. Charles Buckman spoke English well and sometimes acted as interpreter for the others. Tom Main, a younger man, was, however, the chief interpreter for the men. Moreover, both he and Al Chandler were able to independently contribute valuable information. Biographical details on the chief informants are appended to the present volume. 124 115 124

With all of these men, Dr. Cooper was on excellent terms. They have told me that they realized from their first meeting with him that Dr. Cooper, being a man of deep religious conviction himself, would understand what they could tell him of Gros Ventre beliefs as they had been taught to them or to their fathers before Catholicism had any hold upon the Gros Ventres. The friendship which developed between Dr. Cooper on the one hand and Thick, Charles Buckman, Tom Main, and above all, The Boy, on the other, was a lasting one founded on the deepest mutual respect. 123

Dr. Cooper usually had the men come to his quarters at the priest's residence of the Mission for regularly scheduled sessions, especially in 1940 when he was able to take phonograph records of over a hundred Gros Ventre songs. The Boy, who accepted me as a substitute for Dr. Cooper in the years when the latter was unable, on account of ill health, to get out to Montana, remarked on a difference in our methods. Dr. Cooper tended to guide the interviews more closely than I and, since we both had the habit of recording the questions we asked, our field notes confirm The Boy's observation. Inasmuch as those who were engaged in making the record were detained from attending to their other duties, Dr. 124 [126]

124 Cooper felt that compensation was due them. It may be stated however that the money paid was looked upon as in the nature of a gift, and the generosity displayed in the form of counter-gifts, both to Dr. Cooper and to me, was truly touching.

115 I was invited to the Fort Belknap Reservation in 1940 to work
123 exclusively with the women and to deal mainly with matters other than religion. The two oldest women at Hays, Coming Daylight
[609 and Singer, accepted me as their "granddaughter" which was
603] fortunate in view of the freedom allowed between grandparents and grandchildren in Gros Ventre society. Although these two old women did not speak English, I was happy in having as interpreters women who were well liked by them and who were themselves interested in "the old ways of doing things." Thus they proved valuable informants on their own account. Mary Ereaux and the late Cora Chandler were two who served admirably in both capacities in 1940; Mathilda Cuts The Rope and Mae Main aided me most ably in 1945 and 1948. Garter Snake, a valuable informant, was the only woman for whom a man, Charles Buckman, interpreted.

123 While on the Reservation, I enjoyed the hospitality of the
124 School Sisters of Saint Francis at their convent. I went out, however, before nine and returned at five or six, spending each day visiting the women in their homes. There we smoked and chatted and worked in an atmosphere of easy informality. Much of the material given by the women might be classified under the heading of "expressive interviews." The older women were interested in the fact that I could take down so quickly in shorthand what the interpreter said, but occasionally checked on my accuracy, and the interpreter's as well, by asking me to read back for translation to them something they had said hours or days before!

In 1945 and 1948 when I worked with the men, who had previously cooperated with Dr. Cooper, the situation was naturally somewhat more formal than that which obtained with the women. We met in the Community Hall at Hays. As our business-like sessions proceeded, various Gros Ventre men dropped in and sat on the sidelines. Many of these, including some who were not regular informants or interpreters, such as Tom Bad Road, Steve Bradly, Rufus Warrior and others, helped by freely joining in the discussion when some problem arose or additional information was needed. 123 124

The material as presented in Part I, Social Life, is somewhat uneven due in some measure at least to the coincidence of age and sex differences in our chief informants. 128 124 The two women,—Coming Daylight and Singer,—who gave the bulk of the material on the life cycle, on kinship behavior and on economic activities, came of a generation earlier than that of The Boy, Thick and Charles Buckman who supplied most of the information on political structure and war. The old women were able to draw on their personal experiences of Gros Ventre life as it was lived before the buffalo disappeared. They themselves had been child-brides, had lived in polygynous households, had worked innumerable buffalo skins, and so on. The men, however, had not yet attained adult status when the most radical change was inaugurated in their culture and thus were denied participation in the former type of culture to the same degree as that enjoyed by the women. Men and women alike, nevertheless, were careful to separate what they knew at first hand from what they had been told. Further, they indicated from whom they had acquired information, and the men especially estimated as accurately as they could to what decade a given event which they were describing might be attributed.

Although a considerable amount of linguistic data was gathered and drawn upon, all but a few of the native words have been eliminated from Part I. 128 126 We hope to present the linguistic material in the future when it may be possible to publish as Part III a transcription of music and texts of the songs which we have recorded. The phonograph records of the 130 Gros Ventre songs are on deposit in the Department of Anthropology of The Catholic University of America, along with the musical notation of songs nos. 1-10, 12-15, 17-19, 23-24, which have very kindly been transcribed by Mrs. Marianne Arden. Songs nos. 24, 34, 37, 42, 43, 65, 89, 91, and 130, have been transcribed and analyzed by Mr. Jack Kilpatrick under the title, The Possible Relationship of Content to Form in Certain Gros Ventres Songs, a dissertation for the degree Master of Music, July 1946, manuscript copies of which are on deposit at the Library of The Catholic University of America.

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# CHAPTER I

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## LOCATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

131 174 The earliest available sources show that in the eighteenth century the Gros Ventres were in the Canadian plains region, far removed from their Arapaho kinsmen. Just where or when the Gros Ventres and Arapaho parted cannot be determined. As Kroeber has pointed out, their tradition of separating while crossing a large frozen body of water on which the ice broke, is not reliable, especially in view of similar traditions of tribal separations current among other peoples.[1] It is possible that there may be some truth in the tradition which Father De Smet had from the Gros Ventres in 1846, namely, that they had become separated from the Arapaho a hundred and fifty years before that date.[2] This would allow, however, only the bare minimum of time which Kroeber has suggested as necessary to account for the linguistic differentiation between Arapaho and Gros Ventre. It would seem a little late also should Morton be correct in identifying as Gros Ventres the tribe, in the region of the Saskatchewan River to the west of the Assiniboine, whom Kelsey mentions in 1691.[3]

101 174 The difficulty of exactly locating the Gros Ventres during the first half of the eighteenth century is all the greater in view of the fact that the observers often used general terms, rather than tribal designations, for the plains peoples as distinct from the Cree and Assiniboine. Among such terms are "equestrian natives," "slaves," and various renditions of the Cree word *ayatchiyiniw*,[4] literally "foreign man, stranger"—the generic Cree term by which all hostile peoples are called. The Cree were closely as-

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[1] Kroeber, 1908, p. 146.

[2] De Smet, p. 265, note.

[3] Kroeber, 1908, p. 145; Morton, p. 113; Kelsey Papers, p. 16, mentions a nation who "knew not ye use of Canoes and were resolved to go to wars."

[4] Cf. LaCombe, p. 325.

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174
sociated with the western expansion of the fur trade by both the English and the French, being dependent upon white goods and acting as middlemen and interpreters. Consequently Cree words were used often by the traders. Mandelbaum explains, in regard to the generic term, that, since the Blackfoot in particular were the enemy tribe, this term came to be especially applied to them.[5] Nevertheless to interpret it as always and exclusively referring to the Blackfoot is misleading.

175 Isham, writing in 1743, after having been for a decade on the west coast of Hudson's Bay, used the generic term in a widely inclusive sense. He was anxious to get the "Earchthinue" to come to the English forts on the Bay to trade. He had never seen any of them except "a Slave, which was brought down by the Southwd. Indians,—their country lies on the back of this Land and to the Westward of the Churchill River where the Spaniards frequent those seas, at the same time does not traffick with that nation,—I have heard from the mouth of the said Slave concerning that country, by which I understood it was situated much as York Fort Hays's River with a fine Navigable River that op'ns into the sea, and with great plenty of the best and finest fur's, which is their Chiefest Commodity's. The Sinnepoets and other Indians Going to war with them, is a hinderance to their Coming to to the English Settlements to trade. . . ."[6] It was presumably from this Indian that Isham recorded two different ways to count ten. One such list he designated as being the "Earchithinu Language," and the other as "Earchethinue Language in another part of the Country."[7] The first can be identified as Blackfoot, in the general sense of the term,[8] but the second is apparently neither Blackfoot nor Gros Ventre.

Le Gardeur de Saint Pierre, successor of La Verendrye and the last of those who tried to find "the way to the sea" for the French, rendered the generic Cree term as "Iactchejlini" but in addition mentions the Gros Ventres by name. He spent the winter of 1751 at fort de la Rayne on the Assiniboine River, and remarks that the wars which the natives of this area have with the Iactchejlini, the Brochets, and the Gros Ventres, would be an insurmountable obstacle to his plans.[9] It is possible, of course, that the Gros Ventres here referred to are the Hidatsa of the Missouri, since some confusion between the two occurs in the later sources, but this is unlikely.[10]

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[5] Mandelbaum, p. 166.

[6] Isham, p. 113.

[7] Idem, p. 35 and p. 36.

[8] Identification by my colleague, Prof. James A. Geary, personal communication, September 17, 1949.

A few years later, the English-speaking Hendry (or Henday) gave the general Cree term as "archithinues," and Wissler was convinced that the people so designated by Hendry, and met by him in 1754–55, constituted the main body of the Gros Ventres, who were then occupying the area between the branches of the Saskatchewan River.[11] Lewis, however, in his recent reconstruction of Blackfoot history, has preferred to follow Burpee in identifying these people as Blackfoot.[12] Whichever interpretation may be the correct one, in 1772 we have our first absolutely unquestionable description of the Gros Ventres by Cocking. He uses the term "archithinue" but gives evidence that it includes not only the Blackfoot groups and Sarsi, but the Gros Ventres as well.

Cocking was sent by the Hudson's Bay Company, as Hendry had been, to try to persuade the "equestrian natives" to come to the Bay to trade. Like Hendry, Cocking too was accompanied by some Cree and Assiniboine in his search out into the northern plains. Though he had started in summer, 1772, by November 4th he had not actually met any of those whom he sought, and in his journal on that date records: "I shall be sorry not to see the Equestrian natives who are a brave people and superior to any who visit our Forts. They have dealings with no Europeans. They live in a southwest westerly direction and draw toward the northeast in March to meet our natives who traffic with them." [13] On November 21st, however, things looked better, as "two Archithinue natives" arrived from the south. Upon being assured that

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[9] Le Gardeur de Saint-Pierre in Margry, v. 6, p. 640.

[10] Scott, p. 547, in his review of the early history of the Arapaho, states that this was the first mention of the Gros Ventres by name.

[11] Hendry, pp. 328–51; Wissler, 1936, p. 5, and personal communication, July 24, 1947.

[12] O. Lewis, p. 16.

[13] Cocking, p. 110.

175 Cocking's party was friendly, these two indicated that they would persuade the rest of their group to come and meet with them. Bad weather delayed the arrival of the larger group, and meanwhile Cocking's companions tried, without avail, to fix and use a buffalo pound which the "archithinue" natives had built the previous spring. Finally, on December 1st,

> "Our Archithinue friends came to us and pitched a small distance from us; on one side of the pound 21 tents of them, the other seven are pitched another way. One of the Leaders talks the Asinepoet language well, so that we shall understand each other, as my Leader understands it also. This tribe is named Powestic-Athinuewuck (i.e.) Water-fall Indians. There are 4 Tribes, or Nations, more, which are all Equestrians Indians, Viz. Mithco-Athinuwuck or Bloody Indians, Koskitow-Wathesitock or Blackfooted Indians,—Pegonow or Muddy-water Indians & Sassewuck or Woody Country Indians."[14]

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101 Thus Cocking gives a very good approximation of the Cree terms, applied even today to the Blood, Blackfoot, Piegan and Sarsi, as well as the designation used by the Cree for the Indians whom we call Gros Ventres.[15] Wissler, and, more recently Ewers, refer to this passage in Cocking and suggest that the Waterfall Indians are the Gros Ventres.[16] Any remaining doubts regarding the identification are dispelled by the following quotation from Umfreville who was with the Northwest Company in the area for four years from 1784–88 and who knew the various groups. He states regarding the "Fall Indians":

> "This nation is named by us and by the Nehethawa [Cree] Indians, from their inhabiting a country on the Southern branch of the river [Saskatchewan], where the rapids are frequent. As they are not very numerous, and have a harsh gutteral language peculiar to themselves, I am inclined to think they are a tribe that has detached itself from some distant nation, with which we are not as

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[14] Cocking, pp. 110–11..

[15] Cf. Mandelbaum, p. 166. For an early and quite independent list and explanation of the same Cree terms, see Richardson's Journal of 1819–20, quoted verbatim by Franklin, pp. 99–100.

[16] Wissler, 1936, p. 6; Ewers, 1945, p. 289–99.

> yet acquainted. In this people another instance occurs of 175 the impropriety with which the Canadian-French name the Indians. They call them *gros ventres* or big bellies; 101 and that without any reason, as they are as comely and as well made as any tribe whatever; and are very far from being remarkable for their corpulency."[17]

It so happens that the French name, "Gros Ventres," has been retained and at present is the most widely used designation for the tribe, although the Blackfoot term for them, "Atsina," is occasionally employed in recent ethnological sources. In the past, however, in addition to the French, translations of that term such as "Big Bellies," "Paunch Indians," and so on, occurred, as well as those derived from the Cree appellation,—"Falls," "Water-falls," or "Rapids Indians." To distinguish them from the village-dwelling Hidatsa, also known as Gros Ventres, sometimes they were called "Gros Ventres of the Prairies," or "Gros Ventres of Montana," in recognition of their later habitat.

Something of intertribal relations on the northern plains can be 175 gleaned from the record Cocking has left us. It seems significant that he does not rate among the "equestrian natives" the Assiniboine whom he knew. Then, as later, the Assiniboine were apparently relatively poor in horses compared to the Gros Ventres and Blackfoot. Cocking mentions in regard to the Gros Ventres, whom he had opportunity to observe from December 1st to the 16th, 1772, that, not only at hunting buffalo but in all their actions, they excel his companions. He notes that the Gros Ventres are mounted on light sprightly animals and that they likewise use pack- [492] horses, which give their women great advantage over the Cree and Assiniboine women "who are either carrying, or hauling on sledges, every day in the year." They impress Cocking as being more like Europeans and he remarks that they are more cleanly in clothing and food than his companions.[18]

The Assiniboine were, however, on account of their close association with the Cree, better armed; and the Gros Ventres were wary enough to ascertain the friendly intentions of Cocking's party

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[17] Umfreville, p. 197.

[18] Cocking, p. 111. At this time too, Cocking says, the Gros Ventres used pottery of their own manufacture and tobacco which they themselves planted.

175 before approaching. It is true that peaceful relations of some Assiniboine, with "Archithinue natives (their friends) two days journey beyond Manitow-Sakahegan," are mentioned.[19] From the location of Manitou Lake it is probable that these were Blackfoot, although Cocking does not specify the tribe in this instance. Then, as later, peace on the northern plains was of short duration. Graham, for instance, in 1775 writes regarding the Assiniboine: [648] "War is their delight and the Archithenues the objects of their inveterate enemity, from these poor creatures they take the fine Horses so frequent among them and which serve to convey their baggage about the country."[20]

175 648 It is significant, too, for intertribal relations that the Indians whom the Cree-Assiniboine dreaded to meet, as they accompanied Cocking out into the plains, were the Snake. On August 24th, 1772, the hunters of his party on the South Saskatchewan River, reported having seen several horses up the branch on the other side, and Cocking remarks: "They are all in general afraid, supposing the horses to belong to the Snake Indians with whom they are always at variance." Again, on September 16th, they saw a strange horse and "supposed it to belong to the Snake, their enemies." Finally, on the last day on which the Water-falls Indians were with Cocking's party, "three Archithinue natives of the same tribe" came from the westward to say that buffalo were scarce and that their countrymen were going to war with the Snake Indians.[21] This bears out the very definite tradition current among the Gros Ventres today that they had to drive the Snake from the territory which they occupied.

Lewis, in his reconstruction of the early history of the Blackfoot, maintains that the Piegan had driven the Kutenai and Snake across the mountains by about 1750.[22] A careful reading of Thompson's account of Piegan history, as given to him in 1786-87 by the old Cree Saukamapee, indicates that while the Piegan had been gaining ground from the Snake since the 1730's, their advance may not have been as rapid as Lewis has suggested. The Piegan

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[19] Cocking, p. 106.

[20] Graham's Observations of 1775, in Isham, p. 311.

[21] Cocking, pp. 103, 106, 112.

[22] O. Lewis, pp. 13, 15, and Map B.

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648

were said to have reached the Stag (Red Deer) River when both they and the Snake were decimated by a smallpox epidemic,[23] which would seem to have been that of 1780. For the next three years there were no wars, as the remnants of both tribes were occupied in merely sustaining life—parties of young Snake men were left unmolested by the Piegan. It was then decided that in future warfare, instead of looking only for the honor of taking scalps, that the Piegan should capture women and young men and adopt them in order to augment their depleted numbers. Apparently the Piegan gradually advanced to the Bow River as the Snake withdrew. Thompson, then among the Piegan at the Bow River, states: "The country where the Snake now [i.e. 1786] are is far away and little known to the Peeagan." Scouts were out five days but saw no Snake. "Affairs were in this state when we arrived."[24] A few days later a war chief with fifty warriors was sent out to examine the country. This party returned after about twenty days with five horses and fifteen mules which they had captured from the Snake, and old Saukamapee's son gave an account of the expedition. If this chronology is correct, Cocking's companions in 1772 had every reason to fear the Snake and to suspect their presence, as the power of the latter would not have been broken in the northern plains until 1780.

Cocking, as others before him, failed in his mission to persuade the "equestrian Indians" to come to Hudson's Bay.[25] During the last two decades of the 18th century, the Hudson's Bay Company, as well as the rival Northwest Company, established trading

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[23] Thompson, p. 336. We know nothing of the wider effects of the smallpox epidemic which affected the Cree in 1736. Cf. Mandelbaum, p. 182.

[24] Thompson, p. 340. The author, pp. 328–47, in giving the account of old Saukamapee, often quotes the latter directly. But inasmuch as he usually omits important diacritical marks, and intersperses comments of his own, care must be exercised in reading these pages which recount events extending in time from about 1730 up to include a few weeks after Thompson's arrival among the Piegan in 1786. Furthermore, he wrote his whole Narrative about 1839, at the age of 70, following his notebooks it is true, but also making generalizations regarding the Piegan which do not necessarily refer to the year 1786–87 he spent among them, but may indicate a later date. See p. 348 where he describes boundaries of the Piegan, Blood and Blackfoot territory.

[25] Cocking p. 111. Cf. Graham's Observations in Isham, p. 312.

[114]

175 posts accessible to the Blackfoot and to the Gros Ventres. So long as the Cree and the friendly Assiniboine were appreciably 648 better armed than the other tribes on the northern plains, the traders had little to fear. But now, with the acquisition of more guns by the buffalo hunters, and with the increasing appetite of the latter, not only for still more firearms but for other items, especially spiritous liquors, they became more and more troublesome and it was necessary to fortify the trading posts.

Since the demand was mainly for beaver, and the Cree were the real trappers, they were particularly favored by the traders. Umfreville (1784–88) complains that both the Gros Ventres and the Blackfoot tribes bring in by far too many wolf skins, and says specifically of the Gros Ventres that they seem not yet initiated into the manner of hunting and killing beaver, dressing skins and killing small peltry.[36] Mackenzie from his observations in 1789 gives the impression that the buffalo hunters were little interested in trading at the posts, and states that the part of the Gros Ventres, who were with the Assiniboine on the plains near the central portion of the Assiniboine River, prepared fresh and dried buffalo meat and tallow, along with a few buffalo robes and wolf skins, to exchange for "arms, and ammunition, rum, tobacco, knives and various baubles," with those who go to traffic with them.[37]

175 Mackenzie gives also the relative position and size of the northern plains groups. Some Cree-Assiniboine are mentioned by him as being at Nepawi and South Branch House, and whose territory extends upward about to the Eagle Hills. Next to them are the Cree about eighty tents and on the other side of the river their number may be 200. Mandelbaum cites this evidence to show that at this time the Cree were along the north Saskatchewan, but had not yet consolidated their position there.[38] Mackenzie goes on to say that at the southern headwaters of the North Saskatchewan dwell the Sarsi, 35 tents, 120 men; opposite to those [161] eastward on the headwaters of the South Branch are the Piegan, 1200–1500 men; next to them on the same water, are the Blood,

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[36] Umfreville, p. 198.

[37] Mackenzie, v. 1, pp. cxi, ciii.

[38] Mandelbaum, pp. 181–82.

50 tents or 250 men; next to them downward extend the Blackfeet, 175
their number may be 800 men; next to them and who extend 161
to the confluence of the South and North branch, are the Fall or Big Bellied Indians, who may amount to about 600 warriors.[29]

## DISLOCATION AND WARFARE (1790–1830)

Within a decade of the time of Mackenzie's observations, however, 175
the Gros Ventres were being ousted from between the forks
of the Saskatchewan where they had been apparently well 648
established since at least 1772, when Cocking met them.[30] Undoubtedly
the Gros Ventres were greatly weakened by the smallpox [731]
epidemic of 1780, as Wissler has suggested.[31] In any case they were subsequently pushed south and east by the allied Assiniboine and Cree, who had the great advantage of being relatively well-armed with guns. Thus the Gros Ventres were launched on the most turbulent period of their career, with enmity toward the whites as an important factor.

We know from Harmon how bitterly the Gros Ventres resented the more favorable treatment accorded the Cree-Assiniboine by the traders. He was at Alexandria, a Northwest Company post on the Assiniboine River, and records on June 10, 1801, the following: "It is currently reported and believed that the Rapid Indians are forming a war party to come against the Indians of this quarter, whom they consider, and I think with sufficient reason, as their enemies. If they come this way they will fall on us as upon the natives themselves, for they say that we furnish the Cree and Assiniboine with what firearms they want, while they get few."[32] Although this particular attack on the post did not materialize, there was real reason to have feared it. In the summer of 1793 the Gros Ventres attacked old fort Brulé (South Branch House) and killed all but one of the twenty or so inhabitants; in 1794 they pillaged Manchester House. These two

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[29] Mackenzie, v. 1, p. cx.

[30] O. Lewis p. 12, places them East of the South Branch prior to about 1750.

[31] Wissler, 1936, p. 18. Cf. interesting tradition of the ravages of the epidemic, pp. 34–36.

[32] Harmon, p. 51.

175 acts of depredation were long remembered and formed the basis for the bad reputation the Gros Ventres sustained among the 648 traders. Henry, speaking of them in 1808 as an audacious and turbulent race, says that they have repeatedly attempted to massacre the traders.[33]

During the early part of the nineteenth century the Gros Ventres continued losing ground to the Assiniboine and Cree. Harmon, again in 1801, mentions, for instance, that a party of Cree-Assiniboine had left Fort Alexandria in June against the Rapid Indians and were bringing a number of women and children for "slaves."[34] In 1803 he records that 40 lodges of Cree-Assiniboine went out on a war party with 40 lodges of "others," apparently against both the Blackfoot and Rapid Indians.[35] Incidentally, as the Gros Ventres were pushed out of the Saskatchewan basin, they no longer formed a buffer between the Cree-Assiniboine and Blackfoot, and these latter came into more direct and deadly conflict. Having rebuilt South Branch House in 1805, Harmon was there in April 1806 when the Cree-Assiniboine in that region went to war against the Rapid Indians, "their inveterate enemies, with whom they frequently patch up peace which is generally short endurance."[36] In August of that same year some Assiniboine reported to Harmon that about 80 tents of Cree-Assiniboine, with about as many of the Blackfoot, were on their way to war against the Gros Ventres. Nothing came of this expedition, however, inasmuch as the temporary allies began quarreling over a horse which each claimed and ended in an all-day fight between them.[37]

And so it went. By 1808 the Gros Ventres had been replaced in [131] the area between the forks of the Saskatchewan and now roamed the territory between the South Branch and the Missouri, although some of them at least went to the posts to trade. Henry remarks that at this time they were bringing to Fort Vermillion a good trade in dried provisions, beaver skins, and grizzly bear and buffalo

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[33] Henry, v. 2, p. 530.

[34] Harmon, p. 55.

[35] *Idem*, p. 78.

[36] *Idem*, p. 119.

[37] *Idem*, p. 120.

robes,—that the Gros Ventres were industrious and were as good 175
skin-dressers as the Mandan and better than the Blackfoot. He
further mentions that they were formerly numerous and dreaded 648
but that since the smallpox, and the depredations by the tribes with
whom they have been at variance, they had diminished. Although
they formerly had bloody wars with the Blackfoot tribes, in 1808
they were at peace with them.

Henry's estimate, however, that at this time the Gros Ventres 161
numbered but 80 tents or 240 men, seems very low.[38] He was
probably basing his figures on those who came that far north to 175
trade, because in 1805 Laroque, while with the Crow on an island 648
in the Missouri River near the confluence of the Big Horn, met a
delegation of the Gros Ventres who were camped on the Big Horn
River behind the mountain. He states that they occupied 275–300
" huts " and that it was with friendly sentiments that they came to
this region. They brought words of peace and said that they came
to procure some horses from the Crow. Laroque referred to them
as " Big bellies of the fort de prairie " and mentioned that they
and the Crow communicated with each other by means of the sign
language, not being able to understand each other in speech.[39]
This makes it quite certain that these Indians were not the Hidatsa.

It would seem, then, from the above as well as from the figures
obtained in the same year, 1805, by Lewis and Clark, viz. 260 [114]
tents or 660 men,[40] that the estimates of both Thompson and
Henry, observing as they were from the Canadian area from which
the Gros Ventres had been driven, refer to only part of the main
group of Gros Ventres. Henry himself remarks in 1811 that the
Gros Ventres are increasing very fast and that he had always
noticed a greater percentage of young men among them than among
the neighboring tribes. He admits further: " I have not been able
to obtain their exact number but am fully confident they exceed
100 tents."[41] Richardson, moreover, in his journal of 1818–19,
identifies the Gros Ventres and claims that they have about 450
to 500 tents.[42]

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[38] Henry, v. 2, pp. 530–31.

[39] Laroque, p. 20.

[40] Cf. Wissler, 1936, p. 4.

[41] Henry, v. 2, p. 733.

[42] Richardson, quoted in Franklin, pp. 99–100.

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During the second decade of the nineteenth century the American fur companies were beginning to show an active interest in the upper Missouri region. As Lewis has pointed out, there were certain differences between the methods used by the companies in Canada and those in the United States.[43] The Americans sent out trappers to hunt the streams for beaver rather than depending on the Indians to bring the pelts to the posts, as did the Canadian companies. The Gros Ventres as well as the Blackfoot resented the invasion of white trappers. To give but a single instance, in the summer of 1810 the Gros Ventres fell on a party of American freemen from Illinois whom they murdered and plundered of their possessions, including beaver skins which were marked and numbered. The Bloods were at war at the same time on the Missouri and murdered a party of Americans. Henry states: "The Bloods in general bear fully as bad reputation as the Fall Indians. They are fully as vicious, bloodthirsty, and turbulent, but, I believe, not so brave."[44]

Still another element which added appreciably to the difficulties of the Gros Ventres, in these first decades of the 19th century, was their increasing conflict with the numerous and powerful Crow. As they continually lost territory to the Cree-Assiniboine, it was not long before they were encroaching on the Crow, who promptly retaliated. It was largely the threat of the Crow to ally themselves with the Americans, in an offensive against the Gros Ventres, that fed the determination of the latter to again raid the Canadian posts. They were desperate for guns and ammunition and felt themselves unable to obtain them through regular trade. The Piegan, in order to protect their own trading interests, promised aid to the Gros Ventres, in case of attack by the Crow, and succeeded in temporarily pacifying them.[45]

In any case, the Gros Ventres were probably responsible for the abandonment of Chesterfield House, which had been rebuilt, after the amalgamation in 1822 of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company, at the mouth of the Red Deer River which empties into the South Branch of the Saskatchewan. It was

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[43] O. Lewis, pp. 23–31.
[44] Henry, v. 2, 735–36.
[45] Henry, v. 2, 718–21.

seemingly after the pillaging of this fort about 1826 that part of 175
the Gros Ventres fled to the headwaters of the Missouri, wintered
there, and then proceeded south to join their Arapaho kinsmen. 648
According to Hayden, the Gros Ventres spent about five years
hunting with the Arapaho and joined them in trading with the
Mexicans.[44] During this sojourn, the Gros Ventres suffered a [731]
devastating attack of smallpox which was said to have reduced
their number by half.

From sources independent of Hayden we know that a large group of Gros Ventres was actually in the Cimarron area during the late 1820's. Gregg, with a party of independent traders, was traveling in the Cimarron Valley when on June 21, 1831, they met a very large group of Indians,—he estimates about a thousand including men, women and children,—who followed them for a day or two in order to pilfer what they could and to receive presents if possible. They were finally bought off with about sixty dollars worth of trade goods contributed by various members of the party. It was thought at first that these Indians were Comanche and Arapaho. "But," states Gregg, "they were principally if not altogether Blackfoot and Gros Ventres." A few days later Gregg received intelligence that Captain Sublette and his party, on their way from St Louis to Santa Fe, had met "an immense horde of Blackfeet and Gros Ventres," and that although the Indians had assumed a menacing attitude, the party had passed without serious molestation. That same evening, however, Gregg camped near a place called the "Battle Ground," famous for a skirmish which a caravan of traders in the company of Mexican troups had in 1829 with the Gros Ventres. Gregg was told that on that occasion, the traders and troops, under Col. Vizcarra, were camped on the Cimarron when a party of 120 Gros Ventres approached on foot. The traders did not welcome the Indians, but seeing that they were disposed to remain until morning, Col. Vizcarra promised to disarm them. Nevertheless he failed to do so, and all of a sudden the Indians sprang to their feet, gave a yell and fired on the party. A Taos Indian, by giving his own life, saved that of the Colonel. The Mexican troops pursued the Gros

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[44] Hayden, 341. The gist of what Hayden gives for this period is correct, [114]
though his dates are inaccurate.

175 Ventres, killing and wounding a considerable number of them, but
648 losing a captain and two or three privates.[47]

An interesting version of why the Gros Ventres parted with the Arapaho was related to Hayden by an Arapaho, named Friday, at Fort Laramie when the former was there in 1859–60. Friday stated that the Arapaho and Gros Ventres were camped together on the Cimarron where the Mexicans usually came to trade with them. On this particular occasion the chief of the Gros Ventres wanted all of the trade, whereas the chief of the Arapaho suggested that half of the traders should go to the Gros Ventres and the other half should trade with the Arapaho. An altercation between the two chiefs followed during which the chief of the Gros Ventres stabbed the chief of the Arapaho. The brothers and sons of the latter promptly retaliated by killing the Gros Ventre chief. Whereupon a battle ensued, but peace was made before many were killed. So the two tribes decided to separate, the Arapaho ranging along the S. Platte and Arkansas, the Gros Ventres passing through North Park to Bridger's Pass and thence along the west side of the Rockies to the region of the Three Tetons.[48]

Whether or not this was the actual cause for the separation,—and it sounds reasonable enough,—it is certain that the Gros Ventres did go north giving trouble to the whites along the headwaters of the Snake and Greene Rivers, and engaging some trappers who had met at a trading rendezvous at Pierre's Hole in the summer of 1832. Hayden has given an account of the battle and others refer to it, but Chittenden presents the most detailed description, having gathered together contemporary newspaper accounts, and so on. His version, with which Hayden's in general agrees, is that The Rocky Mountain traders under William L. Sublette, and those of the American Fur Company under Fontanelle, met at Pierre's Hole in the Teton Basin in July 1832. There were many hundreds of Indians in the valley, mostly Flathead and Nez Percé. When the business of the rendezvous was almost finished, a group under M. G. Sublette set out toward the main Snake River and camped for the night not far from the place of the rendezvous. The next morning a band of Gros

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[47] Gregg, pp. 227–28, 231–32, 239.

[48] Hayden, p. 322.

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Ventres approached in two parties, about 150 men, carrying with them a Hudson's Bay Company flag which they had taken from a party of Hudson Bay Company trappers whom they had recently defeated. The Gros Ventres made signs of truce, but the whites did not trust them and, as a Gros Ventre chief approached the party alone, a Flathead, by prearranged signal, shot him. The Gros Ventres withdrew to a copse and entrenched themselves, the women doing the work while the men held the firing line.

Sublette sent for reinforcements and his brother, William L. Sublette, came with Campbell and others. William Sublette and Campbell led a direct attack on the Gros Ventres entrenchments. The former was wounded and two of the others were killed. Finally Sublette decided, against the wishes of the friendly Indians, to burn the Gros Ventres out. One of the Flathead, who had communicated with the Gros Ventres, informed the whites that the Gros Ventres had 600-800 warriors who would arrive soon. The whites understood the Flathead to say that these warriors were attacking the main rendezvous camp at that moment, and so withdrew. The Gros Ventres fled. This was rated as one of the worst encounters of Indians and traders in the west. Five whites were killed and Sublette wounded; the Gros Ventres casualties are not exactly known, but they were said to have left nine dead warriors and 25 horses together with nearly all of their baggage in the " fort." Later on, when leaving the rendezvous, a party of whites was attacked, two being killed and one wounded. Sublette saw the large body of whom the Gros Ventres had spoken, but they did not attack, and the Gros Ventres finally left the country via the Wind River.[49]

This was not the end of difficulties for the Gros Ventres, however. Chittenden merely states that they then had a serious encounter with the Crow and were scattered over Crow territory. Hayden gives us more details which he apparently had from the Gros Ventres themselves as well as from traders.[50] It seems that the Crow were in the habit of visiting the Flathead to trade for horses and this summer of 1832 they were returning to their country in two groups. The Gros Ventres, without realizing that

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[49] Chittenden, v. 2, pp. 657-62.

[50] Hayden, p. 342.

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Crow were in the vicinity, camped at a place through which the first contingent of Crow had already passed. Four young men from the second division of Crow were attempting to catch up with the first when they came across the Gros Ventres camp, thinking they had reached their goal. The Gros Ventres seized and killed three of these young men, but the fourth escaped to warn his people, who laid in ambush at a narrow pass through which the Gros Ventres would go. Taking the Gros Ventres by surprise, they completely demoralized them, killing 67 and capturing twice that many women and children. The remainder fled and reached safety with the Blackfoot, leaving the wounded where they lay.

### READJUSTMENT (1830–1870)

174 That the whole Gros Ventres tribe could have gone south to the Arapaho, remained a few years, and suffered such disasters in 1832, is highly improbable. First of all, it is unlikely that if the whole tribe disappeared from their usual habitat they would have been able to regain their territory from encroachments by Assiniboine from the east and northeast, by Crow from the south, and by Piegan and Blackfoot from the west and northwest. Furthermore it is equally unlikely that such absence would have been unnoted by Catlin who in 1832, at the American Fur Company Post [161] at the mouth of the Yellowstone, gives a reasonable estimate of the Gros Ventre population (430 lodges) and notes the common error of traders in counting that tribe indiscriminately with the Blackfoot groups, in spite of the difference between the Blackfoot and Gros Ventre language.[41] Moreover, according to Maximilian, Mitchell of the American Fur Company affirmed in 1833 that he had always done business with the Gros Ventres with pleasure, and had never had any proof of the treachery imputed to them. Had there been no Gros Ventres around for five years, Mitchell would no doubt have mentioned that fact. The entire feeling of Maximilian's account is that the Gros Ventres were well known to American Fur Company traders—as compared to some Blackfoot proper, who arrived at the fort and were unknown.[42]

Finally, native tradition gives some negative evidence. Our older informants at the present time belong to the bands known as the Frozens, the Tendons, and the Upper Quarters. If the entire tribe had gone on such a visit to the Arapaho, it is almost certain that some tradition of this travel would have been passed on, as it would have occurred in the lifetime of Coming Daylight's grandmother and of The Boy's father, from both of whom these informants had much reliable material. It thus seems more likely that several bands—perhaps in population amounting to as much as half the total tribe—went on the expedition together. It was customary for the Gros Ventres to split into smaller groups and for several bands to winter together. It would seem probable that one or two such smaller groups pillaged the Hudson's Bay Company post in the late 1820's, wintered together on the upper Missouri, and then traveled south to the Arapaho. 174 [361]

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[41] Catlin, v. 1, pp. 59–60.

[42] Maximilian, pp. 73, 154.

While part of the Gros Ventres tribe was with the Arapaho, the remainder,—roaming the strip of plains between the Blackfoot groups on the west, the Assiniboine on the east, and the Crow on the south,—managed to improve their situation somewhat. Although the whole tribe was probably reunited by 1833, when Maximilian gives us an account of his meeting with them, they were fairly prosperous in spite of the losses sustained by those who had fought at Pierre's Hole and had then been ambushed by the Crow. Maximilian states specifically that " these Indians were formerly very poor, had bad tents and could not buy firearms; they have, however, recovered of late and supplied their wants." [88] One of our informants told us that she had heard often, when she was a child, that in her grandmother's young days,—which we estimate as the early years of the 19th century—the Gros Ventres were very badly off and had so few horses that they used dog transport almost exclusively, but that the situation gradually improved, and, by the time our informant was born (ca. 1855), they again had many horses, a sign of prosperity. From Maximilian's description and from Bradley's estimate of the situation in the early 1830's, it would seem that there was no dearth of either horses or firearms among the Gros Ventres at that time. Maximilian states, however, that they showed the effect of their encounters with the Crow by a noticeable disproportion of the sexes, and that 175 648

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[88] Maximilian, p. 75.

175 they had been hard put to it recently to ransom thirty warriors
648 from the Crow—probably the wounded who had been abandoned in the panic following the ambush of 1832.[84]

So far as relations with the American traders go, in 1833 and subsequently the Gros Ventres were on their best behavior. Maximilian notes that the very large group of Gros Ventres, whom he met at the Judith River as he traveled with Mitchell of the American Fur Company on their way to Fort McKenzie, were surprisingly well-behaved. He adds, rightly enough, that it was to their self-interest to be so, in the light of the fact that formerly they had suffered with the traders on account of their bad reputation. He further remarks that the Gros Ventres were now known as dressing buffalo robes better than most of the other tribes. After trading a bit with the Gros Ventres where they met them, Mitchell invited them to meet him at Fort McKenzie. When the Gros Ventres arrived there, their chief men were received at the
[439] Fort with the same pomp and ceremony as were accorded the
[431] Piegan chiefs in the preliminaries to actual trading. The Gros Ventres, too, upheld their end by bringing the usual presents—a horse and some beaver skins—to present to the trader.[85]

This Fort had been established at the mouth of the Marias, very close to the later site of Ft. Benton, and was known first as Fort Piekann and the next year was renamed Fort McKenzie. It had been established at this point for dealing with the Blackfoot groups, especially the Piegan, and the surrounding tribes. At that time the American Fur Company was particularly interested in obtaining beaver skins, and one beaver skin was worth two buffalo robes. Later, as the market for buffalo robes opened up, the beaver gradually lessened in value so that finally two or three beaver skins became the equivalent of one buffalo robe.[86] Lewis has emphasized what the change in market meant for the Blackfoot groups.[87] Relations of the Gros Ventres with the whites improved, and there was a tendency for the Gros Ventres to become more and more dependent on trading as their thirst for liquor became greater and greater. 175

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[84] Cf. Ewers, 1943, p. 603: Maximilian, pp. 71, 75, 76.

[85] Maximilian, pp. 75–76, 126, 165.

[86] Bradley, p. 203, note on 204.

[87] O. Lewis, pp. 34–59.

At the time of which we are speaking, 1833, the Gros Ventres and Piegan were at least temporarily at peace. The Assiniboine, however, were strong and, with the Cree, were raiding deep into Gros Ventres territory. They were likewise at enmity with the Piegan. Poorly mounted as they were, they were bold enough to attack Fort McKenzie in 1833, and were driven off by the whites, with very little assistance from the Piegan who were there at the time. The next fall apparently this same band of Cree-Assiniboine cut off sixty lodges of Gros Ventres in the Sweet Grass Hills and the Gros Ventres lost 400, only one escaping to tell the tale.[58] 648

The Crow, too, were being very troublesome and Bradley describes their siege of Fort McKenzie in 1834.[59] The traders on this occasion finally resorted to firing a cannon which frightened the Crow. To wipe out their disgrace in running away, the Crow rallied under their leader Rotten Belly, and resolved to make an expedition against the Blackfoot. They came across a dozen Gros Ventres warriors, however, ~~near~~ the Fort and satisfied their honor by killing them instead of the Blackfoot. Nevertheless the Gros Ventres had fought bravely and inflicted losses upon the Crow, including their chief who, when he was dying from the wounds, told his people never to attack the whites again. Bradley tells us that the Crow kept to this advice. Nevertheless they continued giving trouble to the Gros Ventres. Bradley says in 1835 that war continued to rage as fiercely as ever. For example, the Gros Ventres killed 40 Crow who had tried to steal their horses near the Fort; some months later they again got the best of a raiding expedition of Crow.[60]

In building up to the position they maintained in 1855, the Gros Ventres were undoubtedly able to profit from the effects of the great smallpox epidemic of 1837–38 which wreaked such havoc among all the Blackfoot groups and the Assiniboine, but which left the Gros Ventres and Crow relatively untouched. Bradley gives 175 648 731

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[58] Bradley, 219.

[59] Bradley, p. 216.

[60] Bradley, p. 219. For an account of present Gros Ventre tradition of the first of these two battles, see pp. 94–96.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

175 648 731 an account of the terrible number of deaths among the Blackfoot in 1838 and states that the northern Assiniboine lost two-thirds of their number. He says of the Gros Ventres however that they escaped very lightly, their entire loss being less than 200. "This is to be attributed to their being in a measure innoculated by previous experience with the disease communicated by the Arapahoes in a visit to the south."[61] It may be recalled that Hayden mentions the epidemic which struck the Gros Ventres when they were among the Arapaho. Both are probably referring to the severe, but more or less localized, epidemic which hit the Indians of the Kansas Territory in 1829. Hayden, referring to the five year period during which the Gros Ventres hunted and traded along with the Arapahos—says that during this time: "Smallpox passed among them, having been communicated to them through other tribes with whom they were at peace or carried on a traffic. This disease, at that time, destroyed about half their number, but secured the remainder from the next attack which occurred in 1838. At this later period the smallpox only acted on the young, and destroyed a number of them, but the chiefs and elderly men escaped so that the tribe was not reduced to the disorderly and helpless condition of the Blackfoot and other surrounding nations."[62] That the Blackfoot groups were disorganized to a large extent is borne out by a completely independent source. Father Mengarini in 1841 notes the troublesome raids by the Blackfoot, around St. Mary's Mission among the Flatheads on the Bitter Root River, and adds: "Had not pestilence decimated the tribe the year before our arrival, our mission at St. Mary's would have been impossible."[63]

175 648 In the 1840's, then, the Gros Ventres had only one full-strength enemy to contend with, namely, the Crow. Presumably, they took advantage of the opportunity to raid extensively both the Blackfoot groups and the Assiniboine. Nevertheless they evidently continued to keep up their good relations with the whites. Father Point, S.J., who spent the fall and winter of 1846–47 among the Blackfoot and Gros Ventres wrote to Father de Smet regarding

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[61] Bradley, p. 226.
[62] Hayden, p. 341.
[63] Mengarini, p. 8.

the latter tribe that they appeared to him "to have the advantage 175 of the others in being more adroit, more docile, and more courageous; 648 but they are more attached to their old superstitions and are terrible *demanders*, as the Canadian employees here call shameless beggars; happily they are not offended when refused." In addition, he stated that if the Gros Ventres were less importunate he would willingly entitle them the Flatheads of the Missouri "as they have something of their simplicity and bravery." He considered that "the Piegans are the most civilized but the most noted thieves; the Blood well made and generally less dirty; while the Blackfeet proper are, it is said, the most hospitable." Among all four tribes Father Point found the disproportion of sexes great, [162] and attributed to warfare the preponderance of women over men.[64]

The heart of the area held by the Gros Ventres at that time, and 131 claimed by them subsequently at least until the establishment of the Fort Belknap Reservation in 1873, and probably until 1888, 175 was described by Hayden as follows: "At present [1862] and for 648 many years past, they range along the Milk River, on the east side of the Missouri, extending as far as the Cypress Mountains. From this line to the Marias River stretches a beautiful level country well covered with grass and adapted to pasturage of buffalo. Here the Indians under consideration may be found at all seasons—in the winter along the banks of the Milk River where wood may be obtained and in summer on the plains where fuel is not so necessary."[65] As the Gros Ventres were by no means confined to this area they were in intermittent conflict with surrounding tribes.

With a view to settling the quarrels of the Blackfoot, Piegan 175 and Gros Ventres east of the mountains, and of the Flathead, Kootenais and Nez Percé and others west of the mountains, 648 Governor Stevens held a council with the Gros Ventres on the Milk River in August, 1853, and with the Blackfoot and Piegan at Fort Benton in September.[66] In 1854, he ordered a thousand dollars worth of goods from Culbertson of the American Fur Company, for distribution to the Piegan and Gros Ventres. These goods, consisting mainly of foodstuffs with which they were un-

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[64] Father Point's letter of 1847, in De Smet, pp. 254, 256.

[65] Hayden, p. 340.

[66] Hoopes, p. 101.

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familiar, were given to the Gros Ventres at the Milk River. In spite of warnings, the Indians ate the food uncooked, with the result that many became sick and several died. A creole Frenchman, living among them at the time, persuaded the Gros Ventres that they had been poisoned deliberately, and some of the warriors wanted to go after Culbertson with the intention of killing him. Fortunately, however, Culbertson was so well known to and liked by most of the Gros Ventres that the rasher members of the tribe were restrained from carrying out this project.[67]

Stevens concluded in 1855 a treaty at the Judith River whereby the Blackfoot Nation (including the Gros Ventres) agreed that their territory should be a common hunting territory for all signatories. The United States agreed to spend $20,000 each year for 10 years in provisions for the Gros Ventres, Blackfoot, Piegan and Blood, and $15,000 a year for ten years in instructing them in agriculture and mechanical pursuits, educating their children, and so on. The non-signatory tribes were the Crow, Assiniboine and Sioux.[68]

Although it was reported that the good will among the tribes was remarkable, and that peace was sincerely desired, raiding parties continued very much as before. In addition, more and more whites were encroaching on the territory supposed to have been reserved for the use of the Blackfoot tribes and Gros Ventres. Gold was discovered within the area about 1862, and Lewis has given a cogent summary of events which led up to Piegan enmity toward both Gros Ventres and whites, and which culminated in war, 1866–70.[69]

## THE END OF THE BUFFALO DAYS (1870–1890).

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The end of the buffalo days was now rapidly approaching. The completion of the Union Pacific railroad in 1869 split the northern and southern herds of buffalo. With the presence of increasing numbers of commercial white hunters, armed with long-range repeating rifles, the end of the great north herd was beginning in 1876. It was not, however, until 1880 that slaughter was universal

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[67] Bradley, p. 271.

[68] Hoopes, pp. 113–15.

[69] O. Lewis, pp. 62–66.

over the area. The Gros Ventres had the benefit of buffalo hunting 136
a trifle longer than the other groups. All the buffalo in Montana 175
were in February, 1882, in their territory, between the Milk River
and the Bear Paw Mountains. The hunting season, of October 648
1882 to February 1883, finished the annihilation of the great
northern herd and left only stragglers, merely a few thousands.[70]
By August, 1883, both the Blackfoot and the Crow Agencies
reported that all game was gone from their respective reservations,
and a letter from the Fort Belknap Agency stated that game there
"was practically exhausted."[71] In 1884 the Blackfoot and Crow
agencies reported that the buffalo was extinct.[72] After ceding [657]
more land, in 1888 the limits of the Fort Belknap Reservation,
which the Gros Ventres share with the Assiniboine, were finally
fixed.[73]

Missionary endeavors, carried on by the Jesuit Fathers, had 175
begun in earnest only in 1885. Prior to that time contact with
missionaries had been sporadic. Father Point in 1846–47 had 797
been well received and sent in a good report of this tribe. When
Father Giorda attempted to go among them in 1862, however, Bull Lodge took him prisoner and stripped him of his possessions. Since his captivity did not last longer than a few weeks, and his property was restored to him, several months later he made another attempt. This time, while there was some opposition at first, he was permitted to baptize over a hundred children. Subsequently Fathers Rappagliosi and Grassi made several visits respectively, and at considerable intervals. Finally, after some preliminary negotiations, Father Ebershweiler established permanent residence in 1885, and the school at St. Paul's was opened in 1887. The mission and school flourished. In 1891 the founder was replaced by Father Flusi, assisted by Father Sansome.[74]

The Gros Ventres population—always small, relative to that of 175
surrounding tribes—was steadily declining. Hayden's estimate 161
of 1853 placed the total at 2520.[75] In 1883, at the time of the

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[70] Hornaday, pp. 492, 506, 510–11.

[71] Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1883–1915, pp. lx, 98.

[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 109.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 295.

[74] Palladino, pp. 187, 195–96, 230, 232, 235.

[75] Hayden, p. 344. Gros Ventres today claim their number was then 10,000.

175 disappearance of the buffalo, the population was officially recorded
161 as being 970. By 1895 it had been reduced to 596.[10] At this low
ebb, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was still a
[554] strong feeling among the Gros Ventres against the white man's
dress; as of old, a man's wealth and standing still was measured
[178] by the number of horses he owned. Nevertheless the ceremonial
aspects of their culture, already on the wane before that decade,
had practically disappeared.

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[10] *Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs* 1883-1915, pp. 101, 188.

# CHAPTER II

# TRIBAL ORGANIZATION

The greater bulk of our material on the Gros Ventres covers the 131
fifty year span from about 1835 to 1885. During that period, the
tribal territory centered about the Milk River. The present
Reservation, the boundaries of which were finally fixed in 1888, [648]
represents only a small part of the land claimed and held by the
Gros Ventres as their own.

## Band Names and Affiliation

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The political organization of the Gros Ventres was simple. The 621
division into fairly autonomous bands was basic, and apparently
the number of bands was twelve. Our informants, both those who
were adult and those who were children, at the time when the [115]
whole tribe still encamped as a unit, agreed on that point. The list
of band names given by our two oldest informants, Coming Daylight
(b. 1854) and Singer (b. ca. 1856), is as follows: Coffees,
Same as Assiniboine, Plenty Bad, Greys, Fast Travelers, Water
Horses Once a Day, Upper Quarters, Frozens, Buffalo Overloaded,
Tendons, Bloods, Night Hawks. These two old women
maintained that, in their own experience, the bands camped in
this order, and in a circle, when the whole tribe was together.

Quite independently of the above list, another was obtained 621
from The Boy (b. 1870). As a child he witnessed the formation 115
of the camp circle, and he knows many details of previous decades 114
from his father, Lame Bull (b. ca. 1825, d. 1890) and from other old men. The Boy's list agrees with that given by the two women, except in regard to one band. He includes a group called Poor Greys and omits Night Hawks. All of our informants insisted that the Greys and Night Hawks were distinct bands, but there was a difference of opinion as to whether or not the Greys and Poor Greys were in reality the same band.

Seven of the band names can be identified with Kroeber's num- 621

621 bered list: Same as Assiniboine (No. 5); Fast Travelers (No. 6); Water Horses Once a Day (No. 2); Upper Quarters (No. 4); Frozens (No. 1); Tendons (No. 3); Bloods (No. 7). Furthermore in Kroeber's supplementary list we find the Coffees and Night Hawks mentioned; we are probably correct in assuming that Kroeber's Dusty Ones in that same supplementary list correspond to our Greys. Kroeber does not refer, however, to either Plenty Bad nor Buffalo Overloaded; whereas our informants could not identify Kroeber's Fighting Alone (No. 8).[1]

621 The fact that there is as much agreement, namely, in ten band names, between Kroeber's information and our own, is quite
114 remarkable since the band names were nicknames, the explanations for which were quite trivial. Not only were variations used to designate the same band by different informants, but also apparently the band names were frequently changed altogether.

For example, Kroeber's Smooth-worn-tent-people were designated variously by our informants as Slick Runners, Slippery Travois Poles and Fast Travelers—all of these taken from the little explanatory anecdote that this band was supposed to travel so far and so fast that the ends of the travois poles which dragged on the ground quickly became smooth and worn.

Similarly the Dusty-ones of Kroeber were termed by our informants Greys (proper) and Those Who Do Not Wash Their Faces, playing around the theme that the members of this band did not paint up as did other Gros Ventres and that they thus looked unkempt and dirty.

Those-who-do-not-give-away, or Buffalo humps, mentioned by Kroeber were consistently identified by our informants as Upper Quarters, the explanation lying in the reputation for stinginess acquired one time when members of the band were asked for meat, and gave the upper quarters or hump of the buffalo instead of the more desirable parts.

The Opposite-Assiniboine or Same-as-Assiniboine were also called Poor Ones because they, like the Assiniboine tribe in general, possessed few horses.

Our informants said that Water Horses Once A Day were so called because the band members were too lazy to water their horses more often. 621 114

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[1] Kroeber, 1908, p. 148.

The story regarding the Frozens is that one winter people were hungry and the members of this band killed buffalo; when they were asked for meat, they replied: "The meat is frozen and we can't cut it." The alternative name for this band, given by Kroeber and by one of our informants, as Plumes or Those-who-wear-feathers-on-the-head, is probably an older name for the band, but one for which neither Kroeber nor we received an explanation.

The Coffees and Bloods were so known on account of their going to extremes in the consumption of these two foods respectively.

Plenty Bad refers to the fact that this band was numerous but were all "bad" people, that is, that there were few with good reputations as warriors.

Buffalo Overloaded were supposed to have been very foolish people. Their name derives from the story that on one occasion, when hunting, they saw a small herd of buffalo, one of which sat down. A band member said: "That buffalo is overloaded (i.e., he has eaten too much and has died)." The others said: "Let's wait till all the buffalo get overloaded, then we will go and get our meat." One by one the buffalo sat down and when the hunters thought they were all dead, they walked toward them, but the buffalo, catching the scent, ran away.

The Tendons were so named because they were said to have expressed a preference for the neck tendons of the buffalo as food.

The Night Hawks received their name from the habit of the band members of breaking wind audibly, the sound suggesting the noise the night hawk makes as it flies.

Only one of our informants mentioned Berry Men as the name of a band, whose place in the camp circle was said to have been next to Water Horses. Although this name is likewise listed by Kroeber, none of our informants could say to which band the term referred. Several other names of bands which various informants mentioned as having been heard by them to have existed in the past were Black Horns, Yellow Tail Feathers, Saw-whet Owls, Red Eagles, Torn Leggings, and Traders. One informant, 621 114 The Boy, ventured the following tentative indentification, saying that these may have been earlier names respectively for Same As Assiniboine, Upper Quarters, Water Horses, Night Hawks, Coffees, Frozens. A few informants had heard of Breech Cloths and Weasel Skin Headdresses as band names but didn't know which modern bands they might have been, always assuming that the number of bands had been twelve.

361 621 114 As to the exact order of the bands in the camp circle, there was no real agreement. The order given by Singer and Coming Daylight differs from that given by Kroeber. Furthermore, while the two old women were emphatic that the places within the camp circle were permanent—"otherwise we could not remember all this!"—some of the men informants were under the impression that the band from which a new Flat Pipe Keeper was chosen moved to the center position opposite the opening of the camp circle, and that the others shifted accordingly.

361 621 In any case, the circle, with opening toward the rising sun, was the formation employed when the whole tribe was together. When bands were separated from the main group they might or might not camp in this way, depending somewhat on the length of time they expected to remain in one spot, and on the nature of the terrain. Sometimes, for instance, the lodges of the various families of the band were strung out along a watercourse.

According to The Boy, there was a tendency for bands which camped in proximity within the big camp circle to go off together when the tribe split up. The Upper Quarters and Frozens were often together and, along with them, the Same As Assiniboine or occasionally the Greys (proper) and Buffalo Overloaded, usually staying more or less in the vicinity of the Milk River, the center of the territory claimed by the Gros Ventres. Whereas the Tendons, followed by the Poor Greys and Bad Plenty, moved for winter quarters to the country bounded by the Big Sandy, the Marias River (at Ft. Benton), and the Bear Paws; while the Fast Travelers as a rule sought out the country south of the Missouri toward the Yellowstone River and Crow country, accompanied by perhaps the Coffees. Water Horses and Bloods were friendly with each other and joined now one group and now another. 554

621 A band which was thus followed by two or three others had

added prestige. Those mentioned as leading bands above were 621 seemingly the most numerous and most prominent in the recent 554 past, and their representatives are more numerous at the present time. While the Frozens, Upper Quarters and Bad Plenty have the most living descendants, apparently there are no Poor Greys or Coffees today, only one Night Hawk, and a few each of the others.

Although Coming Daylight and Singer claimed membership in the Frozen band, they had no false modesty in proclaiming: "The Frozens were the best workers, had the biggest lodges, the prettiest women and the best-looking men. In fact they were the 'aristocratic' [565] families, being the best-dressed and having the most horses." This was confirmed voluntarily by Cora who stated that she belonged to the Same As Assiniboines, but had heard all her life that the Frozens were the most distinguished band along the lines the old women mentioned. The men informants admitted that some bands were considered better in some respects than others, but failed to be more specific, and added that regardless of the reputation of the whole band, an individual man had to make his own way.

It is somewhat difficult to arrive at the exact situation as to band 621 affiliation and exogamy inasmuch as the band ceased to function not long after our oldest male informants were born. Our oldest female informants, whose memory includes the 1860's, stated in regard to this individual or that, whom they mentioned, that they could not remember to which band he had belonged. In fact the old women became quite impatient when questioned on this subject since from their point of view it was not important. To them the question of marriage regulations was a practical one of avoiding as mate any person to whom blood relationship could be traced, no [582] matter how remotely, and any affinal relative not of the same generation.

There was general agreement among all informants, however, that under normal circumstances children were of the same band [591] as their father.[8] Nevertheless, residence was an important factor, and not a few persons claimed affiliation with bands other than those into which they had been born. Coming Daylight, for 621 instance, said she was a Frozen, the band to which her mother had 597

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[8] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 147.

621 597 belonged. She was orphaned at an early age and was raised by her maternal grandmother under the protection of her mother's brother, Crow Bull, a prominent member of the Frozen band. Garter Snake claimed to be a Tendon, likewise the band into which her mother had been born, although her father, Bull Lodge, a so-called "Hudson Bay Company breed," was classed as a Frozen. If a child were adopted by, and remained during his childhood days with, a family of another band than that into which his real father had been born, he became a member of the adopting band. For instance, Lame Bull adopted a boy whose father belonged to a different band, but the boy was always known as a member of Lame Bull's band, the Upper Quarters.

[591] 621 One informant stated that when a woman married she became a member of her husband's band, but this statement refers in all probability merely to the fact that patrilocal residence was often practiced. Each of our older women informants stated as her band the one in which she grew up. When speaking of their husbands, these women, each of whom had survived several mates, seldom mentioned their band affiliations, unless asked specifically, nor did they mention to which of the soldier societies their several husbands had belonged. [602] One gathers the very distinct impression that the kinship bonds were the all-important social relationships so far as Gros Ventres women were concerned, and that the wider political and social groupings did not impinge very directly on their lives.

621 582 All informants stated that one should not marry into the band in which he claimed membership and in which he was brought up. There was a difference of opinion among them, however, as to whether one might marry into his mother's band providing he had not been raised therein and no blood relationship could be traced.[8] The Boy stated positively that a man who would so much as flirt with a young woman of his mother's band would be disliked. Charles Buckman differed, holding that any marriage would be proper, providing the far-reaching incest taboos based on blood and affinal relationship be observed. The Boy admitted that, because of changes which occurred in band affiliation, occasionally a person would take a wife from some other band than that of either

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[8] Kroeber, 1908, p. 147, prohibition of marriage extended to mother's clan.

his father or mother and still discover later that she was related 621
to him. The Boy's own experience illustrates this. The Boy is 582
an Upper Quarters as was his father, and his mother was a Frozen. It so happened that his mother's father was one of three brothers who were Frozens. The grandson of one of these three brothers married a Bad Plenty and stayed with his wife's band so long a time that he was known as a member of the Bad Plenty and his children took that affiliation. The Boy married one of the daughters of this family, a woman known as a member of the Bad Plenty. Only after several years of married life did they one day discover that The Boy had married his maternal grandfather's brother's great-granddaughter! Charles Buckman, whose father was a white man, and whose mother, a Bad Plenty, later married a Water Horses man, took Charles there to live, and he claimed affiliation with the latter band. He married a Bad Plenty woman, however, and discovered years later that his wife was remotely related to him on his mother's side. It seems certain that in former times, when the bands were functioning, an Upper Quarters would not marry an Upper Quarters, that is, that an individual would not marry into his own band; but beyond this, apparently only known blood and most types of affinal relationship were bars to marriage.

Within the band, close relatives usually camped in proximity, 621
whether residence was matrilocal or patrilocal. The general consensus of opinion among our informants was that most of the persons within a band were related to each other. Band members would not wager against each other for high stakes in gambling, [628]
and sometimes the whole band might become involved as a unit in case of blood revenge.

## CHIEF OR LEADER

The term "chief" was employed to designate any man who had 622
distinguished himself in war.[4] Each band then might have several or many such "chiefs," but among them would be one recognized as leader, "he who takes us around," that is, the one who directed the band when it moved from place to place.[5] This function seems

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[4] The Gros Ventre term is *nätcä* (m. s.) *näkyä* (w. s.). For linguistic shift between men's and women's speech, see Flannery, 1946, pp. 133–34.

[5] The Gros Ventre term is *ninä'ninänä:titc* (m. s.). Kroeber, 1908,

622 to have been the primary one of the leader. He decided where to
go and when, in order to hunt, to seek lodge covers, to gather ber-
ries, to cut new tent- and travois-poles, and so on. He invited peo-
ple, prominent men of his own band and of other bands, and fed
[574] people every day. He would have provisions on hand and was pre-
pared to carry out extensive hospitality. He would be one who
had plenty of buffalo horses which younger men—his sons and
nephews—would use on the hunt, and numerous pack horses which
returned from the hunt laden with meat. His wives would invite
old women, and especially needy ones, to help slice meat, prepare it
for storage, to render grease and extract marrow, all of which
these old women were glad to do in return for some fresh meat.

As explained by The Boy, a man had to work up from the ranks,
622 so to speak, to be recognized as chief and as leader. "It paid to
555 be prosperous and a good man. In the course of time people
would look up to him as leader and other bands would be told that
he is the leader. He does not ask for this distinction but, if he
is prosperous and good, people recognize him. The band gets
together and tells him: 'You are our leader.' He holds 'office'
for life. As he grows old he might tell the people to select some-
one else, but, even so, they would continue to look up to him and
to ask his advice and consult him. There are obstacles in the path
of life, and one who would rise must walk around or over them.
To be an acknowledged leader a man must have distinguished him-
self at war, but many who were known for their brave deeds were
not necessarily in line for leadership.[6] The kinds of things which
would have prevented a man from receiving this type of recogni-
tion were the following. First of all, murder of one of his own
band. For instance there was a well-known character who had

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p. 147, mentions that "Each band seems to have had a recognized chief or leader."

[6] Denig, whose experience with the northern plains tribes extended from 1832 to 1854, expresses, p. 403, the concept as follows: "In fact the rank or standing of each Indian be he chief or warrior is so well known and his character so well judged by the vox populi that he takes his place spontaneously. A higher step than his acts and past conduct confer, imprudently taken, would have the effect of injuring him in their eyes as a leader. Every chief, warrior or brave carves his own way to fame, and if recognized as one by the general voice becomes popular and is supported; if not he mixes with hundreds of others in similar situation and waiting opportunity to rise."

an outstanding war record, was known to be courageous and not 622
afraid to die, yet, because he was quick-tempered and murdered a 555
member of his own band, he forfeited what would have been a very good chance of becoming leader of his band. Second, a man who had the reputation of being woman-crazy, of bothering other men's wives, or who was guilty of rape or incest, would not be selected as leader. Furthermore, a man who wished to rise should control his temper, be good to others and avoid lying, back-biting and jealousy in regard to other prominent men. If he had these qualities, and was eminent at war, he would rise high in public [793]
esteem and be in the running not only as a leader of a band, or of the whole tribe, but also as Keeper of one of the Sacred Pipes."[1]

It was further explained by this same informant, The Boy, that 622
if the leader died, there was a lot of talk both by members and non-members as to who was qualified to succeed. Those outside the band speculated on whom the choice would fall and said: "It ought to be so-and-so," and in this way attempt to influence the opinion as to which of the outstanding men of the band had the best qualifications. Soon a certain man became the leader, and once he was invited to a meeting of other band leaders he was "full-fledged."

In carrying out his duties, that is, in deciding when and where 622
to move, the leader consulted with others and proceeded in a 623
democratic fashion. If two or more bands were camped together, for instance, the leaders would consult among themselves and come to a decision as to whether or not the bands should remain together and as to where they should go. Other men would be present and any one of them apparently had the privilege of speaking his mind. "Suppose that the leader had decided that his band should leave the other and go to some particular spot. Someone in his band who disagreed with the decision would speak up and raise the question of, say, danger from the enemy. He would suggest a different place free from such danger and where game would be plentiful, where there was a good camping ground and sufficient water for the horses, etc. He would give his reasons in detail, and, if it

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[1] The role of the Keepers of the Flat and Feathered Pipes is discussed in detail in Cooper, Ms. 1949.

622 seemed that the others present agreed with him, the leader would [623] give in and have the crier announce the revised decision."

[484] On the march, the leader went at the head of his band and showed the way. When several bands were together, the leader of one would have decided where he intended to go, and, if the other bands had decided to go along with this one, they followed, but were free to break away at any time.

[621 793] The band to which either the Keeper of the Flat Pipe or the Keeper of the Feathered Pipe belonged had a certain distinction as there was a tendency when the tribe split for each to have a considerable following.

173 643 According to tradition, as related by The Boy, the Gros Ventres had had in the fairly remote past a formally selected chief or leader of the whole tribe. It was said that he functioned when the whole tribe was together and that his decisions in important matters were made in consultation with the chief men, including the leaders of all the bands. There was no regular council and anyone [623 793] present might express his opinion. Often the Keepers of the Sacred Pipes were present at such meetings called by the tribal chief, but if they were not present they were supposed to be kept advised.

The last regularly selected leader of the whole tribe was said to have been White Eagle, who held this position in the last decades of the eighteenth century. It was said further that White Eagle was preceded by White Shield, of whom there are many stories extant, and that White Shield was preceded by Elk Going Against The Wind. The Boy gave the following information regarding the "election" of White Eagle. The account was given to The Boy by his father, Lame Bull, who had it from Old Man Gopher, a cousin of Lame Bull's paternal grandfather. "The Gros Ventres had been badly decimated by smallpox and only about 30 lodges were left.[*] Old Man Gopher and his sister, both of them very young children at the time, were the only survivors of their family. The old men among the survivors of the tribe got together and proceeded to choose a chief. White Eagle was then a young man

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[931] [*] A reasonable chronological estimate would identify this as a tradition referring to the devastating smallpox epidemic of 1780. For historical data, see p. 9.

and he knew that the old men were meeting. When he was called 173
in he wondered 'Why do they call a man so young as I?' But 643.
after White Eagle accepted the pipe and prayed with it,—thus
accepting the office,—all said 'Ai-e-e-e-.' Then White Eagle called
one of the attendants: 'I am through praying. Come and get this
pipe.' The attendant got up and took it to the first band chief to
the left of the door as one entered the lodge. The band chief lit
the pipe, said prayers to White Man Above, passed it to the next
man on his left who likewise smoked, prayed and passed the pipe
on until it reached the last man to the right of the door. Then the
pipe was passed back, with no smoking except by the two Keepers
of the two Sacred Pipes who were present, and then the two attendants
and the announcer smoked. After that, they smoked socially
and told stories until White Eagle got up to talk and told what he
thought should be done, what would be for the good of the people.

"When White Eagle accepted the pipe he said, addressing the 168
old man who had gathered the others together: 'Old man, I accept
the pipe. I accept it with my whole heart. I am a young man, I 173
am rather backward about everything. But since you chose me to 643
be your head chief I take it with good will. Since I've done what
you have asked me, in return I'm going to ask you to do everything
I request. Don't refuse me. Don't think because I'm a young
man what I say may be taken lightly. Now we've had smallpox
and there are many dead. Among the living are many single men
and single women. This very night I want each man to select a
wife or each woman to select a husband—this very night I want
*every* man and woman to marry. If this is done in a few years
our old numbers will be restored. After the men and women get
together we'll move to where there are buffalo. We will kill
buffalo and tan the hides for lodges and bedding for these couples
and, after this is done, we'll cut poles for the lodges, so each new
married couple will have a home of their own. If we do this our
population will increase fast.' After this speech White Eagle told
the announcer to tell the people what he had just said and to tell the
women not to refuse the men who ask them, and the men not to
refuse the women who ask them. So the announcer told all this in
the name of White Eagle, the head chief from then on. All was
carried out as he had ordered and in a few years the population had

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173 very much increased. White Eagle governed the people very
643 wisely and he governed until he died."

It was The Boy's impression that following White Eagle, the
643 chief of the whole tribe was no longer formally selected and simply attained his position through gradual recognition of his merits.[9] Sits Like A Woman succeeded White Eagle and was tribal chief in the first decades of the 19th century. He was followed by his son of the same name who was a signer of the 1855 treaty, and was still recognized as tribal head when he died suddenly about 1870. Coming Daylight claimed that this Sits Like a Woman II was certainly the greatest chief of her time and that, when he died, people were forbidden to light their camp fires as a sign of mourning. During the subsequent period Lame Bull was outstanding among the leading men, but he witnessed the dissolution of the
[657] band system and the camp circle. The Fort Belknap Reservation had been set up in 1873, encompassing much more territory than at present, and the first houses were built in 1882.

619 In spite of the fact that a tribal chief was recognized, band
621 autonomy was apparently preserved. The ceremonial organization cut across band organization, however, and band autonomy was
796 relinquished at the times during which the Sacred Dances were held. The movements and activities of the tribe as a whole were then in the hands of the company to which the vower of a particular Dance belonged.[10]

### THE COMPANIES

561 Kroeber notes that "men of the tribe of age to make any one ceremony were not all in one society or company but in several, the total number of companies being three or four times as great as the number of ceremonies. Each company had a name which it

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[9] So far as it goes, this would seem to confirm O. Lewis' interpretation, pp. 42–43, that the earlier Hudson's Bay Company policy on the northern plains reinforced tribal chieftaincy, but that with the development of competition in the fur trade, authority was weakened.

[10] For a discussion of the Sacred Dances, see Kroeber, 1908, pp. 239–68. Other details are given in Cooper, Ms. 1949. The following discussion is concerned only with the composition of the ceremonial organization so far as it can be reconstructed.

retained throughout its existence and held its ceremonies without 561 participating in those of any other company." He gives the list of company names. He is aware that the Stars are not quite comparable to the other companies but is not clear as to the position of that organization.[11]

Our information from The Boy, whose father, Lame Bull, was the contemporary of Bill Jones, mentioned by Kroeber, and whose ceremonial experiences were the same as Bill Jones', throws some light on the subject. Furthermore we have useful material from Turn Toes, who was a member of another one of the companies. Incidental information was obtained from our other informants as well.

According to The Boy: " When a bunch of young men of somewhat similar age grew up, they were old enough to take the place of another group or company. There were a number of these companies. These young men began to have meetings and these meetings had names, although not organized as yet. Let us say 'Rosebushes' would be the name by which they were called. Another group of boys grew up and these would be called 'Hang-onto-a-dog's-tail-and-run-or-be-dragged-by-it.' Other groups would come along and be called by such names as 'Many-little-horses,' 'Potbellies,' 'Calves (of the leg),' and so on." Incidentally The Boy recognized 21 out of the 25 names listed by Kroeber as those of companies, although he gave the names above quoted quite independently of Kroeber's list.

The young men who so met and acquired names were 15–17 561 years of age, according to one informant, and 16–19 or 20, according to another. In any case, they decided as a body to join either 575 of the two societies known as the Stars and the Wolf-men. We know from Kroeber's data, as well as from The Boy, that Bill Jones and Lame Bull were members of the group of young men who banded together under the name of "Bigbellies" or "Potbellies" and who subsequently joined the Stars. Lame Bull was born about 1825, so this company must have joined the Stars some time in the early 1840's. One of our informants, Charles Buckman, a contemporary of The Boy, remembers having heard that the Potbellies at one time numbered about a hundred.

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[11] Kroeber, 1908, pp. 232–33.

561 Turn Toes (b. 1860) was one with 30 or 40 other young men who, in a group known as Calves (of leg) joined the Wolf-men about 1877. Turn Toes was certain that "Having-the-breast-of-a-woman-as-pillow" and "Holding-onto-dog's-tail" were companies which had joined the Stars. According to Turn Toes' account, when his company, the Calves, joined the Wolf-men, four men from the company which had just preceded them in entry were asked by the present company to act as "elder brothers." These four considered themselves honored to instruct the new company before they would appear publicly at the next Wolf-men's dance. Lame Bull had been one of the four so selected from among the Potbellies to initiate the next incoming Star group, but we failed to obtain the name of that company.

It apparently was permissible, either before or after the company was so initiated into the society, that any one of its members could vow the least important and simplest of the Sacred Dances, namely, the Fly Dance. When a member of the company so vowed, all the members of that company, and they alone, went through the ceremony, after which they were eligible as "soldiers,"[13] i.e., when one of their number subsequently vowed any of the other Sacred Dances in the regular series, the company not only participated but also was in complete charge for the duration of the ceremony and had the authority to enforce whatever "laws" might be enacted. Inasmuch as the Sacrifice Dance was outside the regular
[625] series, if that Dance were vowed, the members of the vower's company could participate if they wished, but in any case those not actually dancing acted as police.

An hypothesis which reconciles Kroeber's and our own data on
561 the companies and age societies is the following. All or most of
575 the young men of the whole tribe, between the ages of 16 and 19, formed a company which met informally for some time before it joined either the Stars or the Wolf-men, and, after having gone through the Fly Dance, acted as police force during the Sacred Dances vowed by any of their number. When not participating in a Sacred Dance, the members joined in the purely social activi-

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[13] Kroeber, 1908, p. 229, "The members of the age-societies are called beniinen, commonly translated at the present day as 'soldiers,' etymologically probably 'all-men,' or 'all-(?)-men.'"

ties of the larger society which the company had joined. Meanwhile 561
another group was meeting informally before it was admitted 575
into one or other of the Societies. Since the Stars and Wolf-men were approximately even in number, there probably was a regular alternation. According to reasonable estimate, the Potbellies joined the Stars about 1840; the next group of young men would then have joined the Wolves, say in 1843 or 1844; the following company joining the Stars in about 1849–50.

If the Sacred Dances, except the Sacrifice Dance, were gone 796
through in order, there would thus be several companies each year 561
whose members were eligible to vow any one of the Dances, and our informants were all under the impression that one or more of the Dances was given each summer. It seems quite clear that the Law Enforcer Dance was vowed only by the older levels of the active warriors. After having gone through this rite, these men
more or less retired as "old men," and, having "sat on the sage," [886]
acquired certain privileges and freedom denied to their fellow tribesmen who had not yet gone through this Dance. These "old men" acted as ceremonial grandfathers, i.e. sponsors and teachers, for others going through the various lodges, but were no longer active as Stars or Wolf-men. They became members of an undifferentiated group of elders, the ranks of their original company [888]
having no doubt been drastically thinned out by the time they would have arrived at this status.

If the above interpretation be correct, there would be three age 561
divisions: the "young men," those meeting in companies; the "middle-aged, mature men," whose companies had joined either the Stars or the Wolf-men, and, having gone through the Fly Dance, were eligible to vow the other Dances; the "old men" who had gone through the Law Enforcer's Dance and were no longer active in the Star and Wolf-men societies, except two of their number, one of whom served as announcer in each.

The young men, who together formed the company, being of approximately the same age, were tied together by bonds of friendship and there were apparently not a few pairs of "inseparable [572]
friends" in each company. One of our informants, Cora Chandler, indicated that the bonds holding together the members of a company 561
were so intimate that marriage between their children was 582

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582 taboo. This was the case regarding the children of "inseparable friends," but whether or not it was so regarding the children of all members of the company, mutual hospitality was frequently extended among the members—"a man would most often invite the members of his age group." Further, it was not unusual for members of the same company to go hunting and on raiding and revenge parties together. If a young man were killed at war and [727 his body brought home, the members of his company were said to 764] have assembled and danced around his bier, sometimes sobbing and crying as they danced.

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575 As members of either one or other of the two larger societies they joined with members of other companies, in the Stars and Wolf-men respectively, to perform their proper social dance and to participate in activities such as gambling, horse-racing, "bragging contests," and so on, wherein they could compete with members of the opposite moiety. [616] An individual seemingly tended to choose his serious enemy-friends from among those of the rival organization and thus is explained the spirit of competition which Kroeber notes between the Stars and "other companies."[18]

## THE SOCIETIES

575 The Stars and Wolf-men societies were organized along identical lines and were distinguished from each other only in details of procedure.

Each society included approximately half the total number of able-bodied warriors in the tribe. They each had two renowned men as leaders—two Star leaders of relatively recent times having been Comes At-flying and Crazy Bull; two Wolf-men leaders, Skinner and Strikes On Top. The leaders remained mounted when the others of the society were marching on foot in preparation for their dance, and carried whips at the dance as insignia. These men were supposed to have been outstanding warriors who had while mounted actually counted coup against the enemy. Two members of the last-admitted company served as *atsa'an* (waiters, messengers) at the dances, and each society had an announcer, presumably chosen from among the "old men" who had gone through the Law Enforcers Dance.

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[18] Kroeber, 1908, p. 234.

Each society had its distinctive songs which would be used by 575
its component companies in carrying out their police duties during 533
the Sacred Dances. Both had their "begging songs," as well as their marching and dance songs. Everyone in camp would know from the songs which of the societies was performing.

In connection with the distinctive dance of either society was 533
first the preliminary "begging." This meant that the members of
the society, dressed in their best and mounted on their finest horses, 575
would select the lodges of prominent men belonging to the opposite 796
society in front of which they would sing.[14] The leaders of the 572
society were supposed to be present on these begging expeditions, otherwise their enemy-friends could take advantage of their absence and twit them by singing a special song.[15] The members of the society might be accompanied by their wives, who helped out in the singing, and usually a member of the society would suggest that they sing in front of the lodge belonging to his enemy-friend of the opposite society. If, while they were singing, the owner of the lodge failed to appear, his enemy-friend would peep into the lodge and at this the owner, assisted by his relatives, would get busy and give food to be used in the feast of the society which was doing the begging. If the owner of the lodge were a prominent man, who wished to take this occasion to enhance further his reputation, he might give something really valuable to the singers and would have the opportunity later of bragging: "On such-and-such an occasion, this is what I gave you Wolf-men (or Star men)." If he were a really good sport, our informants said, he would even send his wife out to sing with the others. After something had been given to the society, the singers sang other special songs,[16] while the rest danced.

After obtaining in this fashion the wherewithal for the feast, 575
the society members lined up two-by-two at the entrance of the 796
camp circle. The two noted men carrying whips remained mounted, while the column stepped in time to the music provided by the singers who were carrying the drum at the end of the procession. They wove in and out, snake-dance fashion, while

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[14] A begging song of the Wolf-men was recorded as No. 98; two such songs of the Stars, as No. 96 and 97.

[15] Recorded as No. 101.

[16] Recorded as No. 95 and No. 100.

575 796 the marching song was sung.[17] Upon reaching the entrance of the enclosure, which had been constructed in the middle of the camp circle, the double column parted, and filed around the inside of the enclosure and took their places. The noted men bearing whips, having been helped in dismounting, took up their positions at either side of the entrance, and the musicians carried the drum to the center of the enclosure where they provided the music for the dancing.

[243] The dance of each society was distinctive. The Stars carried rattles, each designed by its owner,[18] which they waved about, as they danced. The Wolf-men did not have rattles or any special paraphernalia of the kind, but symbolized wolves as they stepped about, one hand at the forehead, and the other held behind to represent the tail.

575 535 These dances with their preliminary "begging" expeditions were not put on regularly, but at the discretion of the societies. A time would be chosen when the whole tribe, or most of the bands thereof, were together, when there were no Sacred Dances in immediate prospect, and when there was no apparent danger from the enemy. If these conditions prevailed, one of the societies might proceed, singing loudly: "Harden your hearts, Wolf-men (or Stars)," meaning, "be prepared to give."[19] Not immediately, but some time later, when auspicious conditions again prevailed, the other society would "retaliate."

These dances were purely social. In between times members belonging to one would compete with members of the other in horse-racing, hand-game gambling, "bragging contests" recounting conquests in love and war—each trying to out-do his opposite number.

[177] Sometime between 1875 and 1880 the Wolf-men adopted the Grass Dance from the Assiniboine. Thereafter this Society was sometimes called the Grass dancers.[20]

575 The Boy was under the impression that the Stars and Wolf-men

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[17] Recorded as No. 102.

[18] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 236–37, with illustration.

[19] These songs were recorded as Nos. 93, 94 for the Stars.

[20] Kroeber, 1908, p. 238 describes this dance as the "war-dance." For the adoption of the Grass Dance and subsequent history of the two societies, see Flannery, 1946, pp. 39–70.

had probably had different names before his father's time but that the division into two big groups of "mature, middle-aged" men was always characteristic of Gros Ventre organization. This same informant was likewise under the impression that a man would have to stay with whichever of the two societies he, with his company, had originally joined. Turn Toes said however that he had known a few cases of men who had originally been Stars later joining with the Wolf-men, and of one Wolf-man who afterwards joined the Stars. These known cases, however, occurred fairly late in Gros Ventre history, and probably after the formation of new companies had ceased. 575

## SANCTIONS OF FORCE

Social sanctions were seemingly the most important means of control. Public opinion was effective in all aspects of conduct. Public disapproval meant loss of prestige and in more severe cases made itself felt by "shunning." It was brought to bear upon the individual in an especially effective way through ridicule, as exercised particularly in the enemy-friendship.[21] 626

A considerable number of misdeeds, like theft or failure to observe the rules in ceremonial life, were believed to result automatically in supernatural punishment ("bad luck"). Fear of retaliation through witchcraft also exerted a restraining influence.[22]

There were only three situations in which sanction through physical force was applicable. These were, first, failure to obey the rules of behavior promulgated by the society in charge while any one of the Sacred Dances was in progress; second, murder; third, adultery on the part of the wife.[23] 681

In regard to the first, it is quite clear that in case one of the Sacred Dances had been vowed, the whole tribe had to come together and remain united until the rite was finished. "If the bands happened to be scattered at the time a Sacred Dance was to 688

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[21] For a discussion of the enemy-friendship, see pp. 102–06.

[22] Cf. also pp. 169–70 for a discussion of social and other types of motivation proposed to children. Witchcraft is dealt with in detail in Cooper, Ms., 1949.

[23] A detailed treatment of punishment for adultery is given in pp. 183–90, and will not be discussed in this section.

688 be held, runners were sent by the company of the vower and all were obliged to attend. If, in preparation for the Dance, the vower and the members of his company made a ruling, for example that a hunt was necessary, this would be announced. It would be stated that no one should go out alone to kill buffalo because they wanted everybody to kill some, and it was added: 'This is the order of the Wolves (or Stars). If anyone disobeys this rule, the Wolves (or Stars) will attend to them!' Should anyone have disobeyed the order, when they all returned from the hunt it would be announced: 'So-and-so disobeyed our rule.' The company of the vower would then go in a body to the delinquent's lodge, singing a special song.[14] The people would know that someone was going to be raided and all would go out to see who the culprit might have been." The delinquent knew that if he showed anger and resisted, he was in danger of being hurt or even killed. The company confiscated the culprit's meat, taking all of it that was there, and in addition would usually tear up his lodge. Should the delinquent have an enemy-friend among the "soldiers," that one took the lead in punishing and might even go so far as to cut the ears off of the delinquent's finest horse—a deep humiliation for its owner.

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625 Thus during a Sacred Dance, from the time the vow was publicly announced until the Dance was over, the company of the vower was in complete authority and could apply sanctions of force if the various rulings were not obeyed. They actually constituted a police for the duration of the Dance. As soon as the Dance was over, however, the vower's company had no further power and the police function inherent in the soldier societies apparently remained in abeyance until some other Sacred Dance was performed.

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224 There is some little question as to whether or not attendance of all bands was compulsory at the first spring hunt for buffalo and, if so, whether the Star and Wolf societies exercised their authority at this time. On one occasion in 1939, one informant, speaking in general terms, stated that the chief of the tribe had the possibility of calling on either the Stars or the Wolves to punish an offender who hunted alone after it had been announced that the buffalo had been sighted and all were to hunt together; and on another

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[14] Song recorded as No. 103.

occasion he stated that it was the "law" of the spring hunt that 224
no one should hunt buffalo alone or in a small group, violation of 688
which invoked the sanctions applied by the Wolf-men or Stars. 625
However, in 1940, this same informant stated twice, explicitly, that
there was no police power except at the Sacred Dances and on a
third occasion in that year said: "After the Sacred Dance the
company disbanded, and the chief resumed control, but he did not
punish anybody for hunting buffalo alone."

In any case, authority was delegated to the companies only 688
temporarily. Otherwise there was no agency beyond that of the 625
family which could apply sanctions of force, and then, on only two
counts. A husband had the right to take the life of an unfaithful 684
wife; the family had the right of blood revenge in case of murder. 682
In both, however, less extreme modes of behavior were approved
and bloodshed could honorably be avoided.

When murder occurred, if the family of the murdered person 687
could be persuaded to accept a payment of goods as restitution,
further spilling of blood was prevented. It was said that the lodge
of the band chief offered temporary refuge to a murderer and that [778]
sanctuary was likewise available in the lodge of the Keeper either
of the Flat or of the Feathered Pipe. It was thought that if the [672]
murderer and his family, who collectively shared responsibility for
the crime, could flee the scene, time would be gained for negotiating
the blood-price. If one blood relative killed another, there was no
retaliation, but the murderer was shunned.

While there was a considerable amount of fighting and quarreling 689
among the Gros Ventres, especially under the influence of
liquor, disputes were usually settled without bloodshed. Outright
murder, as distinct from deaths attributed to witchcraft, was
seemingly relatively infrequent. The following seven cases,
arranged chronologically, illustrate actual behavior. Each of these
was referred to independently by several different informants
with a high level of agreement among them on details. The total
represents all the murders that were known to have occurred in the
period from about 1850 to 1885.

*Case No. 1.* These events took place about 1847. Two young 682
men, who were related by blood, went on foot to steal horses from
the enemy. One had obtained a fine horse, but the other had been

682 unsuccessful. The latter, who was walking on the return journey, asked the other to lend him his horse. The owner of the horse didn't see why he should do so and the two got in a heated argument. When one reached for his knife, the other beat him to the draw and killed him. When the survivor was asked on his arrival home as to the whereabouts of his partner, he said: "I don't know where he is. I haven't seen him since we separated at such-and-such a place." Not long after that, however, when the group was traveling, they came upon the body of the murdered man. Only then did the survivor confess, but nothing was done to the murderer under the circumstances.

682 688 *Case No. 2.* Although the details leading up to this case are missing, it is known that a few years prior to 1860 a certain man stabbed and killed his son-in-law, shot his horses and burned his possessions, leaving only the lodge standing. The murdered man's brother shot and killed the murderer in retaliation. Unfortunately, however, this was not the end of the matter. The one who had avenged his brother's death was participating in a Kitfox Dance and was in the ceremonial lodge in the center of the camp circle just about to receive the pipe. At that moment, one of the company which was policing the Dance—a relative of the original murderer—shot and killed him on the spot. There was of course great confusion, and one of the chief performers in the Dance protested this act of violence which, regardless of other considerations, should never have been perpetrated during a Sacred Dance. The policing company, however, presented a united front and rode around the Kitfox lodge in the center of the circle singing: "No one say anything to us or we will shoot right now." Nevertheless the wife of the man who had just been killed ran out of her lodge, when she heard them singing, and said: "Oh I am not afraid of them. I am going to give them a tongue-lashing!" People warned her not to do so, but she called out insults at them and added, among other things: "Look at their dirty buttocks!" Several members of the company said: "Let's go over there and beat her to death," to which she boldly replied: "If you want to do it, it is all right." The chief performer in the Dance, who had protested before, spoke up again: "Now you want to do something wrong again. Why kill an old woman who is through with her life any-

way? I warned you not to do anything. If you kill her we will 682
not proceed with this Dance. It is a serious thing to interfere 688
with a Sacred Dançe, but if you persist we will all scatter." This appeal was effective and the Kitfox Dance was carried out without further mishap.

*Case No. 3.* On one occasion in about 1862, some men were 682
drinking and two of them got in a tussle. The one who got the worse of the fight went to his brother and said: "Kill your wife. Her son [by another marriage] almost killed me. If you kill your wife, you can have one of mine." The husband took his brother at his word and went to his lodge and killed his wife, put her corpse on the fire, and heaped coals on top of it. The wife's two brothers, hearing of their sister's unjustified murder, went that night to where the men were still drinking. When the man who had originally instigated the murder saw the brothers coming closer and closer, he called out: "I don't want anyone to come any nearer or I might shoot him by mistake." But the brothers were not deterred and, approaching closer, shot and killed the man who had called out. Thus the one who had encouraged his brother in murder paid for the crime with his own life. Nevertheless his relatives mourned for him as they would have had he died under different circumstances, but they made no attempt to retaliate for his loss.

*Case No. 4.* The following incident occurred about 1865. Practically the whole tribe was camped together and there was a lot of drinking going on. A woman, crying, came in the lodge of her sister's husband. When they asked her the cause of her tears she told them that a certain man had beaten up her son and herself. Her sister's husband immediately took up his gun and went out into the night looking for that man. When he met up with him, without asking any questions except to be sure he had the right one, he shot him dead. When he returned to his lodge, his wife urged him to flee, but he refused to do so, saying: "I don't think his people will take up for him since he was in the wrong." Nevertheless several riders dashed by, shooting at the lodge but not doing any damage. The women were frightened and started
running toward the chief's lodge. There was snow on the ground [778]
and they had a hard time locating it, but at last they got there and

682 called out: "Our home is in trouble, we have come for protection." The chief invited them in and assured them that, while they were [778] there, no one could harm them. But they could hear the relatives of the murdered man mourning for him. The man who had killed him continued to remain in his lodge. Evidently the male relatives of the murdered man refused to act further than merely shooting at the lodge, but finally the mother of the dead man and his father's sister, accompanied by his nephew, a boy of about ten who carried a loaded gun, came to the lodge. The women called out: "Come out here, if you are a man." They repeated this several times, but when the man failed to appear, a woman in a neighboring lodge invited them to come with her. She fed them well and eventually persuaded them to let the matter drop.

*Case No. 5.* These events occurred about a decade later than the preceding and details are fuller. It seems that a young man had captured a very fine horse under dangerous circumstances. He proved the horse's quality while enhancing his own prestige during subsequent encounters with the enemy. An older man, jealous of this young man who was making such a noteworthy reputation, kept pestering the young man to give his horse to him. Had the older man asked in the proper way, the younger might have acceded to his request. But the request had been made in a bullying fashion, and the older man had treated the younger as though he considered him still a child, yet the latter behaved well in simply ignoring the bully rather than answering him back.

One day, however, the older man was drunk and came up to the other, gun in hand, and said: "I am going to kill you." To which the younger man replied: "Well, be sure you do a good job of it. Be sure you don't miss me. Hit me with a bullet, because if you don't kill me, I'm going to kill you!" The older man pushed against the other's chest with his gun saying: "Well, you aren't made of rock, I can kill you," and then moving the gun near the other's head, he shot wide, intending merely to frighten him. The young man, however, did not so much as flinch, and said: "Why don't you kill me? I guess you don't want to—but be sure I'm going to kill you!" The older man said: "Oh, you are just talking!" and went into his lodge. But the young man got his gun and when his companions tried to stop him he said: "I don't want to do like he did and just bluff!" They let him go because they were convinced that he wouldn't go through with it. Nevertheless, he went to the older man's lodge and walked boldly up to that man and put the gun at his head. The other men in the lodge were drunk and neither they nor their host believed the younger man was really serious. The young man said: "You are not made of iron. That is the only thing a bullet will not penetrate. I am going to kill you now!" Whereupon he blew the other man's brains out.

Because that older man had been a bully and had threatened the other's life, public opinion was apparently more or less on the side of the younger man, and the relatives of the man who had been killed made no immediate move to avenge the life of their kinsman. One day, however, after a long time had elapsed, a relative of the man who had been killed was wandering around the camp circle, gun in hand and quite drunk. A companion took advantage of the situation by attempting to get rid of the young man, who had killed the older man, and whom he suspected of playing around with one of his wives. The companion reminded the drunken man that he should avenge the death of his relative, and shoot into the young man's lodge. He shot once and missed; so the companion told him to aim lower, which he did. On this second shot he hit and killed, not the young man whom they had hoped to kill, but that young man's father. Whereupon, the young man reached for his gun and was about to pursue the killer, but he was restrained by his sister and a man, who had rushed to the lodge when he heard the shots. His sister was loath to let him risk his life inasmuch as their younger brother had been killed shortly before that in an encounter with the Crow, and on that occasion the young man had had to be held forcibly to prevent his pursuing the Crow single-handed. Meantime the one who had fired into the lodge dropped his gun, and escaped on the already saddled horse of someone who had just come into camp. The companion who had incited the shots stood his ground and would almost certainly have been killed unless the sister and the other relatives of the young man had persuaded him that enough lives had been lost and to let the matter drop.

*Case No.* 6. On one occasion, sometime between about 1875 and 1880, a number of the bands camped together and there was a

682 big drinking party. One man decided to quit and go to bed, so he left the others, taking a little liquor intending to save it for another time. A little later his father-in-law came to the lodge and asked him for a drink. He let him have what he had been saving and went back to bed. Soon his father-in-law returned and asked for more liquor, but the man told him quite truthfully that he had no more. His father-in-law was not satisfied but kept insisting and at last grabbed the man by the hair of the head and dragged him from his bedding. The man, who had been holding in his temper, finally lost control at this manhandling and, grabbing a knife, stabbed his father-in-law in the stomach. His father-in-law belonged to a powerful band and had many relatives who would avenge his death, so the son-in-law fled and escaped punishment.

Some time passed until this man, who had killed his father-in-law, was one evening invited to perform a cure. Before he started, the father of the sick child gave him a drink of liquor. He was just about to begin the curing ceremony when a relative of his late father-in-law entered the lodge asking for a drink. The host invited him in, but the murderer, who was a little drunk by this time, resented the intrusion and gathered up his medicines and went out. As he left, the intruder said: " Who is that leaving as I come in? You cannot budge a slick rock! (meaning that if the other were not afraid of retaliation, he would not have left)." But the murderer was insulted at this taunt. He got his gun and, sticking it in the entrance of the lodge he had just left, shot at the intruder and killed him. There was a great commotion during which the murderer's father was shot but not killed. The older brother of the intruder swore he would kill the murderer in revenge and, gun in hand, sought him out. The murderer, however, heard him coming and hid behind a tree. When the brother of the murdered man came abreast, he shot and killed him too.

The Frozens, the band to which both the recently killed men and the father-in-law had belonged, were furious at this triple loss. The murderer's band were afraid of their wrath and nearly all of them fled with him. So the Frozens killed all of the murderer's horses, tore up his lodge, and burned all of his belongings including the medicines. They were about to pursue the band which had fled and kill all of them, when Lame Bull and Big Beaver, members

of the Upper Quarters who were not involved in this fight, stopped 682
them and reminded them that this was a drunken fight and that the members of the two bands concerned were not really enemies. By their bravery in confronting these angry and drunken men who were armed, while they themselves were not, these two peacemakers prevented what might have turned into a "civil war."

Although outwardly calm reigned, tension remained high and the bands scattered in the attempt to maintain peace. A few weeks later, however, messengers were sent to all the bands to inform them that a Crazy Dance had been vowed and that all the bands must meet at a given spot and together prepare for the Dance, moving as a unit to the locale selected for the Dance. All did as directed, but the band of the medicine man, feeling the mounting tension, decided to break away from the others and left the main body the night before the tribe reached the place where the Dance was to be performed. When the company which was policing the Dance heard about the defection, they went after the band to force its return. The company caught up with this band and found the murderer sitting in the semicircle and smoking with his fellow band-members. The police called out to these men: "Don't you know it has been announced that we have to move to such-and-such a place for the Dance? That is the law. Hurry and move back!" But the recalcitrant band members paid no attention and sat with heads bowed. It so happened that a son of one of the Frozens who had been murdered was a member of the policing company. He rode up behind the murderer and shot him through the head. The other members of the police company shouted: "Let's kill them all!" and fired above their heads to further frighten them. This forced them to move back to the main body in double quick time, leaving the body of the murderer lying there. The Dance proceeded, and after it had concluded one of the Crazy Men was found with his head bashed in, but no one knew who was guilty of this crime and in any case the company had no more authority once the Dance was finished. The Frozen who had used his position as a member of the policing company to avenge his father's murder was killed in action against the enemy shortly thereafter, and so further feuding was prevented.

*Case No. 7.* During a drinking spree toward the end of the 682
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682 684 buffalo days, a certain man left his lodge to join other drinkers. When he returned he saw his wife in the arms of another man and heard her say: "I love you more than I love him." Whereupon he picked up his gun and killed the lover who happened to be the chief of his own band. He spared his wife. No attempt at revenge was made, but the murderer was looked down upon for having killed one of his own relatives.

# CHAPTER III

# NECESSITIES OF LIFE

The dominant technique by which the Gros Ventres met their needs was that of hunting, especially of the buffalo. The yearly round of productive activities was geared to the quest of that animal, with hunting of other animals, collecting, and the processing of raw materials subordinated thereto. 224

## THE SEASONAL ROUND

The Gros Ventres state that buffalo were plentiful in their territory, at least in the area claimed from the 1830's on. This is borne out by studies of the habits and migrations of the buffalo in the northern plains.[1] In the exploitation of this abundant resource there were two regular peaks of intensive hunting—a concerted effort on the part of the tribe as a whole—in the spring and in the fall. During the summer the amount of hunting was fairly consistent, being stepped up occasionally in view of any Sacred Dances which might have been vowed. During the dead of winter the hunting of buffalo was said to have been only sporadic and not on so large a scale. 221 224

Some time in April the whole tribe foregathered to organize the first spring hunt which lasted about a month. This coincided with the northward migration of the buffalo which had wintered on the Montana ranges. The smaller herds formed in great masses as they sought their summer pastures on the plains of the Saskatchewan, where they again scattered into smaller herds. During this time the whole Gros Ventre tribe camped together and the hunters worked out from the camp as often as necessary, there being plenty of game within easy distance as the millions of buffalo passed a given spot. Apparently after this big hunt was over, the spring Pipe Rite was held and then everyone was free to move where he pleased. Usually the main body of the tribe stayed fairly

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[1] Hornaday, pp. 388–89, 425.

221 224 well together during the ensuing summer months, a band or two moving off by themselves to rejoin the tribe in time to prepare for whatever Sacred Dances might have been scheduled, and parties of 10, 20, 30 or more men would go off to raid the enemy. Precautions had to be taken, too, against the ever-present danger of being raided by the enemy, especially by smaller groups separated from the main tribe as they went further and further from the center of their territory in quest of game.[9]

[251] The hides of buffalo killed during the spring and summer were used to make parfleshes, moccasin soles, lodge covers, ropes and the like. Fresh meat was usually plentiful although it was necessary to move six or eight times a summer to keep up with the buffalo, some smaller herds of which apparently remained in Montana in spite of the migration of the vast majority to the north. [222] Meantime as the various berries, wild fruits and wild roots ripened, collecting was done whenever opportunity offered, neither tribal nor band movements being determined, so far as we are aware, by that objective, but depending almost entirely on the whereabouts of the buffalo. During August and September, the rutting season, the buffalo joined in great milling masses leaving bare the surrounding range for many miles. The buffalo then separated into smaller herds again and by October, when the Gros Ventres started their concerted fall hunt, the buffalo were in prime condition, their coats sleek and fine.

251 The best time for robe hunting was approximately from October 15 to November 15, but the hunt continued until all had sufficient meat dried and stored to see them through the winter. It was said that as many robes as possible were dressed with the fur on, and

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[9] In this connection it is interesting to note that the old Cree, quoted by Thompson, pp. 329-30, after describing a drawn battle between the Snake and Piegan about 1730 concludes: ". . . night put an end to the battle without a scalp being taken on either side, and in those days such was the result, unless one party was more numerous than the other. The great mischief of war then, was as now [1786], by attacking and destroying small camps of 10–30 tents which are obliged to separate for hunting." Such was evidently still the case in the middle of the 19th century. Denig writes in 1854, pp. 548–50, that when the contending parties are nearly equal, little damage is done. The worst damage occurs, however, when 200 to 400 warriors surprise a camp of 20 to 30 lodges.

meat was dried "in wholesale quantities." This was the time of year when lodge covers and furnishings were replaced where necessary, new lodge poles cut, paint gathered from the mountains, and everything was done to prepare for winter quarters. 221 224

The tribe then split into groups of several bands each to seek places along watercourses where they would be protected as much as possible from the rigors of the weather as well as from depredations by their enemies. Trapping of fur-bearing animals and hunting of deer, elk and antelope by individual methods, such as stalking with the gun as weapon, were done during this season, with only an occasional buffalo being killed. The Gros Ventres placed the greatest emphasis on ability to hunt and recognized their limitations in trapping as compared with the Cree. It was considered most important for a man to be a good shot, whether with bow and arrow or gun. Nevertheless some fur-bearing animals were trapped. For beaver they usually used the steel trap or, when that was not available, they broke the dam and grabbed the beaver. Often they would smoke out an animal like the kit-fox, for example, and then shoot it. They knew a deadfall[3] for the fox and wolf, whose pelts they never used themselves but traded with the whites, and there was one trapping song which was sung to give luck in that pursuit.[4] But all in all hunting of the buffalo and to a lesser extent of the elk, deer and antelope, was a major occupation, while other animals were sought for only sporadically.

### BUFFALO HUNTING AND THE HORSE

The general procedure in hunting buffalo was about as follows. First, scouts, sent out to locate the herd, reported its whereabouts. Then the group of hunters, varying in size according to whether the whole tribe or only a band or two were camped together, would depart from camp in order to reach the herd by dawn. The swift buffalo horses to be used in the actual chase were led unburdened so as to keep them fresh. When the herd was spotted, the hunters mounted their swiftest horses and, at a given signal, all dashed into the herd at once, each man then killing as many as he could 224

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[3] Kroeber, 1908, p. 149, describes the deadfall, and mentions also snaring and other methods of hunting birds.

[4] The song was recorded as Nos. 89, 90, 91.

224 before the buffalo got out of range. Only one such run a day was made and, although all hunters had an equal opportunity, so to speak, since no one of them started before the others, the greatest chance of success lay with the man mounted on the fastest horse. Incidentally the gun never supplanted the bow and arrow as a weapon of the chase because, for a mounted hunter riding close to the game, the bow and arrow was just as effective and even easier to use than the gun which had to be reloaded and which was difficult to aim accurately when traveling at a fast pace. Succeeding generations of Gros Ventre boys were trained in archery right up to, and including, the time of the disappearance of the buffalo.

Our informants stated that while the surround was sometimes resorted to, the chase or run, as described above, was the method [178] preferred by the Gros Ventres. The old-fashioned methods of impounding and driving over the cliff were seemingly abandoned by the Gros Ventres in the 1830's. It was stated that an old man, who died at the age of 98 in 1920, witnessed the last big impounding at the head of the Teton River when he was twelve years old.[8] Our oldest informant (b. 1854) knew of these methods only because her grandmother and other older people had told her stories of what they had witnessed. She put it as follows: "When my grandmother was a young woman, the Gros Ventres were very badly off. Only a person here and there would have a horse, and these horses were not the fast kind that can be used in hunting. In fact they did better by building a row of rocks to lead the buffalo into a big corral;[9] or else by having a man covered with a buffalo robe to act as decoy. This man would run forward toward a steep precipice and just at the edge would jump aside while the buffalo following him would go over. The animals which were not crippled in the fall would be shot with bow and arrow. Every- [492] body had to use dogs to drag their stuff as the people moved around; and they cut the lodges in two so the load would not be too heavy for a dog to draw."

231 The possession of an adequate number of horses, then, seems

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[8] Denig, p. 532, confirms this, holding that all the northern plains tribes, except the Assiniboine and Cree, are so well supplied with horses that they do not need to resort to the corral.

[9] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 148–49.

to have been the key factor in the abandonment of the earlier methods of hunting buffalo. 231 The situation of the Gros Ventres in regard to horses, which had apparently been so bad in approximately the first two decades of the 19th century, gradually improved, according to our informants, by natural increase of the few horses they had and by successful raiding of the enemy, especially for the fast buffalo horse. If Bradley's figures are correct, the Gros Ventres averaged five horses per family in 1830. According to our informants, by about 1850 they had "lots of horses," but we know that, even so, the number of horses fluctuated considerably after that date. Coming Daylight, for instance, remembered clearly several times prior to 1880 when the whole tribe was relatively poor in horses. During these periods people were forced to cache as much as possible so they wouldn't be too heavily [484] burdened as they traveled about on foot. No doubt the same factors were operative in the Gros Ventre area as obtained in Blackfoot territory—severe winters and skin diseases among the horses.[7]

In any case, even in relatively prosperous times, seldom if ever did an individual possess great herds such as are described for the [556] Kiowa. The Boy stated that his father, Lame Bull, who was an outstanding man, had a herd of about 60 horses. Coming Daylight explained: "Each family kept its own little bunch of horses. In early morning they would be taken out to pasture, usually by the older boys; around the middle of the day they would be watered and driven out again; in the evening they would be brought back and the more valuable ones, the swift buffalo horses, were always kept tied close by at night in case of raid by the enemy."

Such a family-owned herd would be differentiated and would ideally include pack horses, riding horses, and a few buffalo horses. The right of disposal over his own horses was, however, recognized [422] for each individual man, woman and child. A man had the possibility of augmenting his own holdings directly by raiding the enemy. Because of the social recognition attendant upon successful raiding, as well as the economic necessity for controlling the 231 means of production, the individual might actually devote in the 556 course of a year more time and energy in pursuing this objective

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[7] For an excellent discussion of the whole problem, see Ewers, 1943.

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than in the actual production of raw materials. This was especially true of the young unmarried man who, though his ability to hunt was important, was even more anxious to establish his reputation for bravery.

## FOOD

262 The Gros Ventres met their need for food very largely, but not exclusively, through a meat diet. Flesh of the buffalo was the meat par excellence and was considered by the Gros Ventres their "real food." To those who had been brought up on buffalo meat, beef was a poor substitute. It was said, by those who experienced the change of diet after the disappearance of the buffalo in 1884, that many of the older people "died of starvation" when deprived of buffalo meat. The Gros Ventres refused for a long time to accustom themselves to beef because "beef, even when fresh, smells so badly, and when we would see oxen slobber it turned our stomachs."

Buffalo meat, either fresh or dried, formed a major part of the dietary the year round. Each man had his own preference as to various parts of the buffalo. Charles Buckman, for instance, liked best the flanks, if fat, but some preferred the brisket. The tenderest part was the hump (withers) and the tenderloin was also a delicacy. Roast ribs, a whole rib for each person, were considered a most succulent feast and the embryo was highly appreciated. It was customary to eat raw the liver and manifolds dipped in blood and to drink some of the fresh blood. Nothing of the buffalo was wasted and every possible part was eaten even to the predigested vegetable food from the stomach and the soft inner part of the hoofs. The coagulated milk from a buffalo cow carrying young or nursing a calf was enjoyed by most, although it was [251] reported that some individuals did not care particularly for it. The guts were cleaned, dried, cooked and put away, and the lungs were sliced and dried. To be eaten with dried meat the back fat was cooked, and tallow was used in like manner. The bones were broken and boiled, and, after the grease was skimmed off and 252 stored, the bone broth was used plain or with either blood or berries therein.

262
Pemmican was made from the base of the tenderloin, a long

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strip on each side of the backbone. The meat was jerked, roasted 252
a little and pounded. Then bone grease was kneaded into the 262
pounded meat and occasionally berries, especially saskatoon berries, were put in. No further cooking was necessary and this preparation was very useful when they had to eat in a hurry, as, for example, at the Sacrifice Dance, when they didn't know at what moment some order might be given by the crier.

Rated next in the scale of foods valued by the Gros Ventres was 262
the flesh of puppies. Although the flesh of grown dogs was con-
sumed only in times of "famine," nursing pups were always con- 231
sidered a great delicacy. "These young pups are to us like chicken is for the whites, and that is why you see so many Indians with female dogs." In fact in former times the following method was used to assist a bitch which was having difficulty in bearing her litter: "One person would tie a rope around the bitch's neck and lead her around the lodge, while another would follow and, as they reached each of the four points of the compass, hit her on both hind-quarters with a moccasin filled with charcoal; by the time she reached the door again, the litter would come!"

The flesh and other edible parts of most of the animals hunted 262
by the Gros Ventres were appreciated if there happened to be a dearth of buffalo, or as a welcome change during the winter months from the dried buffalo meat. As a rule these animals would be exploited for purposes other than for food. So far as additional meat diet is concerned, however, elk, deer, and antelope were the most important. Beaver probably came next. Prairie dogs, gophers, and several kinds of rabbit—cottontail, snowshoe, and jackrabbit—all were eaten in case of extremity, but these were ordinarily considered suitable trapping for children. Bear—black, brown and grizzly—were not sought, but should a hunter come across one, he killed it and the flesh was eaten, the grease being the only part that was to them worth storing. Some birds and their eggs were edible, such as duck, goose, grouse, prairie-chicken, and curlew.[8] There was a special use for meadowlark eggs.[9] Badger and porcupine were eaten, as also occasionally the young of wolves and coyote. The full-grown wolf and coyote, as well as fox,

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[8] Eggs were a favorite food, according to Kroeber, 1908, p. 149.

[9] See p. 143.

262 mountain lion, lynx, bobcat, and otter, never served as food.

Of vegetable foods there was a variety, especially of berries and [251] roots, many of which were gathered in large amounts and dried for winter use, either as seasoning in broths and soups, or to be mixed with grease. Currents, strawberries and raspberries were picked when ripe and only in sufficient quantities to meet daily needs. Juneberries, or service-berries, and gooseberries were dried and stored away in parfleshes. Bitterroot, wild onions and wild carrots were likewise preserved for winter use, as well as wild rhubarb stems. In July larb-berries, another name for which is bear-berries, and "plums" were ripe; and in August the chokecherries and wild turnips were dried and pounded. In late August rose-berries were ready to eat, but were better after a touch of frost. There was no need of storing too many of these since they did not freeze and could be garnered all winter long. It is said that of all the berries and roots available, service-berries and chokecherries, wild turnips and bitterroot, were the most important More of these were put up than of the others.

The yield of thorn-, rose- and larb-berries, of wild carrots and of wild rhubarb was always dependable. Other plants, however, were more erratic. For instance, one year there would be no chokecherries at all around Hays but plenty of them at Lodgepole, only ten miles distant; the next year the situation was as likely as not to be reversed. Moreover some plants grew only in a few localities at best. Red turnips or beet turnips, described as something like a radish, was one of those which was to be found only sporadically and in sandy places; the wild potato, another of the less common plants, grew only in the Sweet Grass Hills and in the Moccasin Mountains south of the Little Rockies, and around Billings.

Such additional foods were evidently of sufficient importance
262 that the women occasionally ventured quite far from camp for
222 berry-picking and root-digging expeditions, disregarding the very real danger of surprise by the enemy. That these edibles were not despised is suggested, too, by the fact that the digging-stick had a prominent place at the center pole in the Women's Lodge, although it is true that the principal concern in the rite centered about the buffalo.

In April, when the sap rises, the Gros Ventres scraped the juice 262
from the inner bark peeled from cottonwood and sometimes even 272
from box-elder. They also chewed the gum from pines. Infusions of cherry bark or roots and peppermint were said to have been drunk as tea, but such concoctions were considered usually more in the nature of medicines.

So long as the Gros Ventres had the buffalo, relatively little in 262
the way of foodstuffs from the white man were imported. Sugar, 439
flour, occasional fresh fruits, coffee and tea were known and used to some extent after about 1855.[10] The possibility of obtaining whiskey, was, however, one of the items which determined the [273]
popularity of a given trading place. Incidentally, tobacco was an important item of trade after 1800, although prior to that time the [276]
Gros Ventres had raised their own.[11]

## CLOTHING AND ADORNMENT

The importance of the buffalo in the economy of the Gros 291
Ventres was as obvious in clothing and in shelter as it was in food. The buffalo robe, dressed with the hair on, was perhaps the most valuable article inasmuch as it was not only a regular part of their garb, but also was the main article of trade with the whites after [439]
about 1830. When decorated, it had high prestige value as a gift. [431]

Seldom was the hide of a buffalo older than two years used for robes since the fur of those of greater age was usually scabby even in the fall when the coats were in best condition. It required the skin of a yearling to make a robe for a twelve-year-old, and the skins of calves made robes for smaller children. When the demand of the trade for robes was very great, the large wool blanket sometimes replaced the robe for wearing apparel and for bedding.

Most of the other articles of clothing were made from well- 281
dressed deer, elk and antelope skins.[12] Deer and elk were more 291

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[10] See p. 22.

[11] This tradition is confirmed by Cocking in 1772, who writes, p. 111, "The tobacco they use is their own planting which hath disagreeable flavor. I have preserved a specimen." Kroeber's informants denied knowledge of the tradition.

[12] In 1854 Denig, pp. 464-65, describes the cloth bought for clothing for summer and fall wear, but states that a real hunter must have a buffalo robe, moccasins, mittens, cap, skin leggings and an extra buffalo robe.

281 successfully hunted than antelope. While the finest clothing was
291 made from deer, elk was preferred for some purposes such as
[825] moccasins and warm shirts and coats—it being more durable but
not equally as flexible.

291 For winter wear, caps and mittens of beaver or otter were made
for men and boys. Beaver skin served as a breech clout for the men in winter, although antelope was preferred for this purpose the rest of the year, unless cloth were available, since the latter was more comfortable than hide which chafed the skin so badly.

Ordinarily unornamented clothing was worn, but for special
292 events, particularly when the whole tribe was together, everyone
301 dressed in his best. Being well-dressed was as important to the
237 Gros Ventres as being well-mounted on ceremonial and social
occasions. The effect on both the eye and the ear was taken into account in the ornamentation. Dyed porcupine quill embroidery lent color, and mica—first heated, then powdered and rubbed over a robe—glistened beautifully. Polished deer-hoofs as edging for a robe or dangling from leggings or garters "made such a nice sound when one walked." This feeling both for color and sound was carried over when material from the whites was at hand, beadwork tending to supplant the quill embroidery and scraps of bright colored cloth and of metal serving as "dangles."[11]

Elk teeth, however, were said to be "the greatest decoration of the Gros Ventres." They were used principally for girls' and women's dresses. Not so long ago there was a man at Hays who wore a vest trimmed with elk teeth, and people would say to him: "You crazy thing, only women have that kind of decoration!" But he was unconventional and would retort: "Well, I dance, too, and I want to look nice." Everyone would laugh, but he persisted
[727] in wearing that vest. Human hair as fringe and on moccasins was
proudly worn by men who had taken scalps.

292 Mink, otter, weasel, muskrat and kit-fox were all used as trim-
237 mings, and occasionally the whole pelt of mink, otter or muskrat
was made into a bag, or tobacco pouch, or other small container. Feathers, especially eagle feathers, were highly prized, and red

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[11] For the detailed comparative analysis of Decorative Art of the Gros Ventres and other plains tribes, see Kroeber, 1908, pp. 151–79.

Feathers, especially eagle feathers, were highly prized, and red 292
paint, prepared from ochre, as well as other paints obtained through 237
the trader, played their part in bodily decoration. 386

The younger men thought a great deal of their appearance. One 292
of the things they made for themselves was fancy painted sunshade- 751
hats of rawhide. The designs painted thereon had a yellow back- 531
ground against which various other colors stood out. Coming Daylight remarked: "These sunshades looked so fine that the other tribes copied them, just like the whites get their styles from Paris." Long thick hair was the ideal both for men and for 302
women. The tail of the porcupine made an admirable comb. A [237]
number of perfumes were used by the young men. The castor of the beaver, for instance, was put in the paint bag so that the material for daily painting would be sweet smelling. Again, young men crushed "Piegan berries," chewed them, and rubbed them on hair, horses, and bedding, as perfume.

Incidentally, according to Coming Daylight, in order to clean 296
their buckskin clothing, the Gros Ventres would wear it into the water, getting it completely wet, and then rub it thoroughly with a certain kind of white clay.[14] She said that the tribe was spoken of by other tribes as always having such nice white clothes, and to this habit of rubbing them with clay she attributes the name by
which the Gros Ventres call themselves, *a'aninin*, "white clay [101]
people."

Ear-rings, worn both by men and women, were made from 301
imported abalone shell, which they cut up and shaped; they also [439]
used a certain type of imported white shell. Many other kinds of necklaces, armlets, and so on were apparently used, but on these we failed to get details.

## HOUSEHOLD AND TRANSPORTATION

The lodges of the Gros Ventres were made from buffalo hides, 342
the number used in each depending on the size of the lodge. They

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[14] This custom is mentioned in the sources of the early 19th century. Cf. Harmon, p. 277; Henry, v. 2, p. 734. The latter adds, as a further distinguishing characteristic, that when the Gros Ventres use red "it is always
of a light color, inclining to pale vermillion. The dark red or Spanish [822]
brown, so much in vogue among the other Meadow tribes, does not suit their taste."

342 were sewn together with sinew. The women selected the poles for the lodge, as well as for the travois, and were responsible for [484] erecting and taking down the lodge, for the arrangement of the interior, for the making of the travois, and for the packing and moving of impedimenta.

The foundation of three poles for the lodge was tied together and then raised as a unit. The other poles were arranged one by one, starting with those of the front. The cover of buffalo hides was tied to one pole, the "backbone," which was placed at the center-back, the cover then being drawn into place and fastened securely at the front, with small wooden pins usually made of cherry-tree wood. The ordinary Gros Ventre lodge stakes were shaped like a pin with a relatively small head. One informant, [184 however, stated that this form of stake often came loose where 177] the cover became taut with the wind, and that she had found the forked type, first observed by her many years ago when visiting another tribe to the south, far more satisfactory.

342 Old lodge covers were saved and cut up to make a sort of lining at the bottom of the lodge in winter, and the snow scraped away 353 to make place for the lodge was piled up on the outside thereof for extra warmth. In summer the ground inside the lodge was covered with willows, sagebrush or rye grass. Decorated robes as windbreaks were sometimes suspended in the lodge behind the fancy backrests, which were made by the women from slender willow rods. The women gathered and peeled the rods, although the young men helped straighten them by pulling them through their teeth. A willow ring encircled the fireplace and a broom of buckbrush was always kept handy. Personal belongings were neatly disposed against the wall of the lodge and in front of these were placed the skins which served as bedding by night and as seats by day. The painted parfleshes were given prominence to lend colorful touches. Dishes, utensils, and stored food were suspended 412 from poles well off the floor.

415 Among the articles of household equipment may be mentioned knives, both of bone and of metal, kettles, horn spoons, fleshing tools, etc., and food containers of various sorts. For the latter, [237] the membrane protecting the heart of the buffalo, the paunch, the bladder, and the intestines of the buffalo, as well as those of the

elk and deer, served very well, and the first three were often used 412
for carrying water. It was said that water kept cooler and 415
fresher much longer in these than in other types of container such 237
as those of metal.

Pottery had been made by the Gros Ventres in earlier times[11] 323
but the only information we were able to gather thereon is contained in the following statements. Coming Daylight volunteered 415
the most details: "They used some clay to boil their meat in. My grandmother worked it. She made a pot and told me how she did it. It was made of black mud of some kind. My grandmother took this mud and mixed some kind of grease or tallow with it and shaped the pot. While mixing the clay with the grease, she would shape it. It was smooth then. When finished it was about 18 in. high, 9 in. in diameter, the same at the top as at the bottom (straight-sided). The bottom was flat because it was put right on the fire and the coals were kind of heaped up around it when cooking with it. When my grandmother finished shaping it, she put it close to the camp fire and turned it around once in awhile so it would dry out. Then, when it was dry, she put water in it and put it on the fire to see whether it would crack. This pot didn't crack. I don't know what became of it. I never used it myself. It was undecorated. This one belonging to my grandmother is the only one I know the history of, and the only one in our family. We used the wooden dishes more than the pot. The pot was used only to cook in. Each family might have had one or two to cook in."

Singer, who was present when Coming Daylight told about this, 323
said she had heard of such pots, but had never used one herself. Mary Ereaux, the interpreter, commented, "In the Missouri River where they are making the dam, the mud taken out of the River, when it dries, is just like cement." When asked regarding pottery, Charles Buckman stated that he doubted that the Missouri River mud could have been used for this purpose. There is a blue clay near Hays that would be suitable for making pots—he had heard that pots were used "in the old days" but did not know how they

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[11] Cocking, in 1772, writes of the Gros Ventres, p. 111: "Victuals are dressed in earthen pots of their own manufacturing much in the same form as Newcastle pots, but without feet."

323 were made. Several days later he reported that he had asked around about how pots were made, and some old-timers said that they braided sinew to the shape of pot they wished; heated white flint and pulverized it, and mixed with the blue clay from around the neighborhood of Hays. This mixture was about 6 per cent pulverized flint. The clay and pulverized rock were mixed in a mortar, pasted over the woven sinew, and baked. "It gets so hard you can't break it." Tom Bad Road, now (1948) about 70 years old told Mary Ereaux that once when he was a young boy he saw an old, old woman making a pot of "sand." The pot had dried hard, but some young fellows used it as a target for throwing stones and broke it to pieces.

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595 The place of honor was at the back of the lodge, opposite the door. Here at night slept the "man of the house" and his senior wife, if he were a polygynist, the other wives and children on either side. Coming Daylight described the arrangement of her father's lodge as it was before she was sent to live with her grandmother. Her father and one wife slept at the rear, the bedding placed parallel to the door; she and her mother had their bedding to the left as one entered the lodge, and perpendicular in regard to the opening, sleeping with their heads to the rear and feet to the door; while her father's unmarried brothers were similarly placed as she and her mother, but on the opposite side of the lodge.

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492 When on the move, the women were in charge of the children and impedimenta and usually traveled in a group considerably behind the men. Horses or dogs were used to draw the travois, and sometimes younger children or the sick and disabled were carried thereon. Mae Main remarked that her memory of riding on a horse travois was not a very pleasant one as she was often annoyed by the horse's tail brushing over her. Horses had to be broken to the travois and a horse owned by a man would never be so used. The horse can draw a far heavier load than a dog, but seemingly the Gros Ventres at no time had so many horses that the dog could be dispensed with altogether and the dog travois survived until very recently. At such times that horses for one reason or another were scarce, the people would be forced to cache a great deal of their surplus and to cut their lodges in half so the load would not be too great for a dog to draw.

To cross a deep river such as the Missouri was quite an undertaking. 484
When they reached the bank, they would spread out in
family groups, while the men and women worked together to convert 501
the lodges into round boats. Coming Daylight gave the following 396
description. "The lodge cover was folded in half lengthwise over a rope of sufficient length that the ends protruded somewhat. Mud was then smeared as a layer between the two halves of the cover and on the outside of that half which would ultimately be in the water. The next step was to take the loose edges together, to form the rim of the boat by bunching up a considerable bit of the material and tying securely; leaving a free space, bunching up another bit of the material, leaving another free space, and repeating this operation at intervals, shaping the receptacle to the proper diameter by running a rope taut from 'tuft' to 'tuft'; then they packed in very carefully as much as the round boat would safely hold, and finally the portion of the rim which was formed by the fold—as distinct from the now 'tufted' free edges—was gathered into place by manipulating the ends of the rope which had been placed originally in the fold, the rope being now tied securely. A lead rope was attached to one 'tuft' at each side of the gathered portion of the rim. Two young men on horseback then dragged the boat into the water and took it across the river, dragging it safely up on the opposite bank."[16]

The boat was watertight and safe to transport any of their 484
belongings, and even children or disabled adults. When the water 501
transporting was finished the mud was washed off and the lodge cover spread on the ground to dry. This didn't take long and the lodge cover was soon as good as new.

The lodge poles had to be transported separately from the cover. 484
The poles were cut when needed, and a hole was burned about four
inches from the top of each. When the lodge was up, the free 342
ends of the short strings of buckskin, run through these holes, fluttered in the breeze, making a fine decoration. The more prac-
tical purpose of the holes, however, was to allow a number of poles 484
to be strung together for moving. For water transport not more 492

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[16] Maximilian, who met the Gros Ventres on the Missouri in 1833, mentions, p. 73, their round boats made of buffalo skin, filled with articles for barter, "drawn by one swimmer and pushed by another."

484 than six poles would be so tied together, a strong line running
through the holes, leaving a loop to go about the horses' neck.
492 Another line was tied around the six, about in the middle, to hold
the poles together as the horse dragged them through the water. A
mounted horse could draw two sets of six poles across the river at
one time, one set on each side, but could not take all the poles for a
lodge on a single trip. Meat packed in skin bags was often lashed
to the poles and did not suffer in transit. Occasionally older children
rode across the river on these poles, and some people paddled
across straddling a single log.

782 The same goods which we have described as used by the Gros
Ventre to meet their needs for food, clothing, shelter and transportation
were likewise used to meet many other needs. Cloth and
clothing, feathers, ornaments, and so forth, were used as religious
sacrifices and offerings. Food was used as payment or part-payment
262 for services of those who helped in production of economic
436 goods, or of those who cured diseases, acted in ceremonial capacity
of one kind or another, as well as in meeting certain specific kinship
342 obligations. Lodges might be painted in accordance with a
531 supernatural vision, and, with the associated songs, were transferrable
to others as ritual objects. Horses were used as payments
of various kinds,—in connection with the bride price, to ceremonial
436 grandfathers, and so on. There was thus no medium of exchange
within the group and no strict classification into producer's goods
as contrasted with consumer's goods is possible.

# CHAPTER IV

## ECONOMIC ASPECTS

### LABOR

In the production of economic goods the man supplied the great 462
bulk of raw materials by means of hunting, doing relatively little
collecting and processing. He was responsible, however, for the
supply and care of the major means of production, the horse. The
chief objects manufactured by him were bows, arrows, clubs,
shields, and ceremonial equipment.[1] The woman, on the other
hand, supplied only a small part of the raw materials, through
collecting, but did most of the processing of raw materials and
manufacturing.

Cooperation within the household was necessary for production, 476
and the household was practically a self-sufficient unit with rela-
tively little reliance on the cooperative work of others. In actuality 592
there was quite a bit of mutual help, especially among relatives.
There was, of course, a certain amount of dependence of the man
on his fellows in hunting in the sense that men usually hunted 224
buffalo in groups and, in view of the common welfare, an indi-
vidual was restrained from selfishly hunting alone and scattering 476
the herd on which his fellows were depending. Nevertheless the
operation was a collective rather than a truly cooperative one be-
cause, once the chase started, each man was on his own and had
the right of disposal over whatever game he killed. It was stated
that in any given run the most a man could kill would be seven or
eight buffalo and that almost inevitably some would get none. No [431]
one went home empty-handed, however, for the more fortunate

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[1] Maximilian noted in 1833 that men make only arms and smoking equip-
ment (p. 103), and that among the Gros Ventres were many war clubs [411]
"made of the long end of an elk's horn" and "daggers" of jaws and teeth
of a bear (p. 75). For other details of materials and manufacture, see
Kroeber, 1908, pp. 150-51. For illustration of a shield, see photograph,
courtesy of Richard Pohrt, pl. 3.

224 476 would share at least the meat, if not the hides, with the less fortunate, which latter would contribute by helping skin and butcher.

[431] Butchering was quite an art and was considered the man's work, although occasionally women accompanied the hunting party if there were a shortage of men, as was liable to be the case especially in winter. Should the party have crossed a river to hunt, the meat was prepared for transportation on a raft by being cut into large chunks, and each two chunks skewered and joined by a thong of sufficient length to hang on the poles forming the raft. The raft [396] was built by crossing two long poles at one end, the other ends free and forming an angle of about thirty degrees. Three or four shorter poles were placed crosswise and lashed firmly in place with rawhide. The paunch of the buffalo, after being washed out, was used as a container for the many leftover bits of meat and was tied to the middle of the lower rung of the raft. A whole beef could thus be loaded on such a raft and towed across by one horseman. [492] When, as was more usually the case, the meat was to be packed back to camp by horses, the butchering was done differently but in such a way that a whole buffalo could be packed on a single horse.[3] [251] Sometimes in winter when a small party went out and they could not pack all the meat back in one trip, the remainder was buried in the snow and called for the following day.

462 281 Once the proceeds of the hunt were turned over to the households of the individual hunters, it was the woman's task to cook the food for immediate consumption and to prepare the surplus for storage. Her most arduous and time-consuming task was the dressing of skins and the manufacture of these into finished articles of clothing, containers, lodge-covers, and so on. It was stated that skins in one stage of preparation or another were nearly always at hand.[4] "They didn't do things in a haphazard way because there was a certain time to do this and a certain time to do that." From the hides of buffalo killed during the spring and early summer, when the hair was not thick, they made the parfleshes and bags, soles for moccasins, rawhide ropes, and lodge-covers. In the fall, when the hide was furry, robes were made.

The older women informants described how, when they were

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[3] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 149.

[4] For some details on skin dressing, see Kroeber, 1908, p. 150.

The older women informants described, when they were
young, they would work at scraping skins pegged to the ground, 462
by leaning over from the waist, feet well apart and knees unbent,
swinging sideways from the hips. They could keep up this 281
rhythmical steady motion, with the short-handled scraper usually [516]
tipped with metal, for hours at a time, one day after another. [412]
Sometimes, too, a woman would spend a whole day softening ropes
of rawhide by rubbing the rope which had been run through the [283
eye and ear apertures of a buffalo skull upon which the horns had
been left so that she, sitting on the ground with legs extended, 237]
could rest her feet against the horns as she pulled the rope back
and forth, making it soft and white.[4] Nevertheless the tedium of 462
these operations was often relieved by the fact that occasionally 476
other women, who had at the moment some leisure, would hear 281
the work going on and would volunteer to help.

It was customary for women to do much of their work in groups.
If a young woman, for instance, wished to make a fine robe, she
would call in some other women, including an older experienced
"hand." The latter would mark the robe where the embroidery [531]
should go, and the younger women did the fancy work. The
hostess would cook for all present and so, in a pleasant atmosphere
of sociability and "woman talk," the work would progress. A
similar type of gathering would be held when a sufficient number
of hides had been saved to make a lodge cover.

In size the lodges ranged from six skins up to twenty-four or [342]
twenty-five, with the average of about fourteen to seventeen.[5]
Much skill was needed for cutting and fitting the skins and an experienced woman would be called in to do that part, while the others helped with the task of sewing the skins together. Our informants stated that a woman would have to "save and save" skins towards a new lodge, which was a necessity about every three years.

Women went out in groups to pick berries and wild fruits as 462
well as to dig roots, but each one had right of disposal over what 476

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[4] Another method for softening ropes is given by Kroeber, 1908, p. 150.

[5] The largest lodge remembered by the Gros Ventres is said to have been that of the Blood Chief, Father of All, who had, at the time of the 1855 treaty, a lodge with two fires, poles 65 ft. long, and the cover consisting of more than 25 skins.

462 she herself had picked or dug. In preparing the material for
476 storage, too, the women would sit in a big circle, pounding cherries
[251] for instance, one woman helping to crush the cherries brought in
by another. But, again, while it lightened the work of an individual woman who might have gathered more than the others,
there was no pooling of resources. Sociability and friendship
were apparently the chief motives for joining such a work group.

While there was a slight amount of occupational specialization,
463 there was no real division of labor in the sense that persons with,
say, supernatural power to cure, and who were well paid for their services, would be supported by this means alone. Nor could a man live, for instance, by specializing in raiding and raising horses. Every man, whatever else he might do, would have to make at least an attempt to hunt. Similarly, regardless of the temporary division of tasks which might be assigned among the women of the household, no individual woman could profit sufficiently through her ability to cut and fit lodge covers or through her ability to embroider well. Some, who were more skilled at one task than another, might perhaps devote more time and energy to that pursuit, but the rewards therefor were more in the nature of prestige than of direct economic advantage. An old woman for instance might be adept at making buffalo-hair rope. Men desiring to have it, would give her things in exchange for it, but it is doubtful if she would receive sufficient from this one type of manufacture to make her independent of relatives, even so far as food was concerned.

464 The potential supply of labor consisted in all able-bodied men of
the tribe from the age of about 17 or 18, at which time a young
[582] man was sufficiently skilled to hunt seriously, and of all able-bodied females from about the age of twelve, the time at which the
average girl was married and was supposed to have been trained
[162] to woman's work. The unbalance of the sexes in favor of females,
a marked feature in the population of the northern plains tribes,[a]
461 plus the fact that the tasks allotted to women could be begun at a
much earlier age than those undertaken by men, meant that the amount of labor contributed by the woman, in manufacturing economic goods, was greater than the amount of labor available

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[a] Cf. Wissler, 1936 (a), p. 38.

on the part of the men for supplying the raw materials. This, 461 however, was more than offset by the fact that the time consumed in producing the raw materials was less than that required to process and complete the manufacture thereof. The following calculation will give at least a rough approximation of the situation. It was estimated by our Gros Ventre informants that one woman would be able to dress about twenty robes a season, i.e., robes taken in the fall hunt and dressed with the fur on. This means she had to devote the equivalent of 60 full days' time to this task alone.[7] Actually she would not be free to work on robes exclusively, as she had to dress other kinds of skins, carry on her ordinary daily routine of procuring fuel and water, care of children, preparation of the daily meals, and in addition cut the [251] enormous quantities of meat to be dried for winter consumption.[8] In contrast, if we can rely on Hornaday's figures, 15–25 men killed about a thousand buffalo in a fall season,[9] which means, taking the higher figure, one man alone would average more than two women could handle.

## VALUE

Given the abundant supply of game, especially of buffalo, and the methods of exploiting it, the individual who controlled the relatively scarce means of production was in a position to command a larger labor supply and consequently to produce a larger surplus. The Boy summed up the situation thus: "The Gros 556 Ventres in their old way of life used to want a lot of horses be- 231 cause they knew from experience that if a man had a lot of horses he could acquire a little wealth and position in life. If, for instance, a family had a lot of horses, the man might have three or four or five buffalo horses with which to chase game and would bring in lots of skins and meat and could afford more wives, and the more wives he had the bigger and wealthier he would be. He could have

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[7] Denig, pp. 540–41, estimates three days' work to prepare one robe for market and states that the preparation of 25 to 30 robes was an excellent winter's work for one woman, with the average at 18 to 20 robes.

[8] Hornaday, p 436, states that a whole buffalo cow, if economically worked up, yields about 55 lbs. of pemmican and 45 lbs. of dried meat.

[9] Hornaday, p. 465.

556 a great big lodge and all the other things that were required. But
231 some men might have only one horse and therefore only one wife.
Such men wouldn't amount to much; they would be by-passed all the time and couldn't get anywhere. Therefore men did really desperate things in order to obtain horses."[10]

556 Horses were thus the most valuable item in Gros Ventre
economy. Other informants illustrated this attitude. Garter
231 Snake, for instance, stated: "As a little girl I didn't know poverty.
735 My parents were rich. They had everything they wanted for their lodge, and clothing, and all kinds of horses so I was never in want at any time. Nevertheless, my father, when he was a little fellow, was very poor and had no horse to ride. Possibly somebody would put his mother, who was a widow, on a horse, but he would have to walk. He had hardly any clothes, he was so poor. One time when he was about 12, the camp was moving and they were going to go quite a distance. He was way behind because he would wait until everybody had gone, and then would follow as best he could. This day he went up on a hill to see where the people were camping next, and then he just lay there crying because he pitied himself for being so poor. It was at this time that he was granted his first experience [with the supernatural]. Later on, having made an offering of a black shirt and some feathers, which he had begged from someone at the camp, and having cut
556 off the first joint of the little finger of his left hand, he was told
231 in a vision: 'Son, I invited you here and I am glad you came.
735 Look over that way (the direction in which the camps lay). You
787 are poor now, but see those camps? You are going to be noted there. Everyone there is going to respect you and depend on you. And look this way (the opposite direction). See that big band of horses? Those are your horses. Of course you won't get them right away, but that is what you are going to have.' He was granted many powers later on, among them how to operate with a woodpecker feather; how to check hemorrhage; how to cure stoppage of the male urinary tract; how to cure consumption; how to revive a horse which was 'played out'; how to make raiders invisible so they could successfully steal horses. And he finally attained those horses he had been shown."

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[10] Cf. Denig, p. 505, "An Indian with one wife cannot amass property."

The above case illustrates how it was possible for a man, in 556
spite of a poor start in life, to rise. Children were instructed by
their elders, as was Thick by his maternal uncle: "Above all things 867
try to have horses. Try to have property and whatever you have, take care of it. By having lots of horses and property, people will respect you and look upon you as somebody."

Again Coming Daylight stated: "They used to think more of 554
horses than of anything else. They were sure proud of owning a
pinto pony. In telling stories when they wanted to describe the 231
best they could think of they would say: 'You should have seen her horse—it was a big pinto pony.'" And in telling of a relative of hers, Woman Chief, Coming Daylight said: "Her husband was not very handsome, but they were well-to-do and she always rode top horses."

While all horses were as a rule well cared for, special attention 231
was devoted to the buffalo horses. On the hunt, for instance, these horses would be led along unburdened by pack or rider to keep them fresh. They were ridden only for the actual chase and after the kill were turned loose to roll around and graze like young colts. When the butchering was completed the meat was packed on other horses and the swift buffalo horses were then led home again. These horses were ridden on social and ceremonial occasions, when their owners wished to show off, and of course the soldier societies were well mounted, but such use amounted to no more than a good work-out, and these valuable horses were never abused nor wilfully exhausted.

Children were exhorted to take care of their property, especially [867]
of horses, and the girls were advised that "a mare is worth everything—it increases—treat her well." It was stated that some attention was given to breeding. A man might judge that a colt showed possibilities of becoming a fast horse. If it fulfilled the early promise the colts it sired would be watched. The less likely of these would be castrated. Likewise, a good mare would, if
possible, be retained by the owner for breeding. A man who [763
owned a particularly good buffalo horse might, on his deathbed, [768
either order that it be killed at his grave or give it to some relative
he knew cared well for horses, with instructions never to abuse 431]
it nor give it away.

426 The lending of horses, especially in an emergency, was not
231 uncommon especially among relatives. The owner however
retained full rights and could dictate to the borrower the use to
which the horse might be put. "One time, for instance," according
to Singer whose husband Iron Bucket was an eye-witness,
231 "there were four lodges or families of Gros Ventres who
426 happened to be traveling along separated from the larger group.
734 Bear Nose's mother was taking care of a young man who was
exceedingly ill. She didn't own the horse which was drawing the
travois upon which the young man was lying. As the party climbed
a steep hill the lines tying the travois to the horse broke and the
travois dropped to the ground. The woman who owned the horse
was already at the top and called down: 'Just leave him. Just
leave him. You are always hauling him around with my horse.'
The others told this woman owner: 'Let us pack him once more
and wherever we stop we will make a sweatbath house for him
and leave him in there and leave food for him.' But the owner
didn't want it that way. The others told her again: 'Just pack him
once more. You should think of the time when he was a Scout
[at Ft. Assiniboine] and he used to get a lot of grub for you [with
his pay].' But she said: 'No. I won't be packing him any more.'
He was pretty far gone—his body already covered with flies—but
the one who had been caring for him finally was forced to abandon
him there with his few belongings and without any shelter or anything
else. When they left him he had a sheet over his head and
he started to cry. But the owner of the horse was adamant. The
others of the party could argue with her, but could take no further
action. They moved quite a distance and that very night a terrible
storm came up and probably finished the young man. The woman
who had been caring for him died shortly thereafter, and the
others thought this was a consequence of their having abandoned
him so callously, but they all said: 'It should have been the owner
of the horse who died instead of the one who cared for him."

231 Because the real competition among the northern plains tribes
721 was for horses, it was not uncommon that a relatively well-to-do
family might lose their entire pack of horses through a single raid
by the enemy. The following experience of Coming Daylight
illustrates the point.

"The Gros Ventres moved camp again to new grounds across the Missouri. They were camped on a bluff overlooking the River, and there was a nice valley full of hay behind them. Her grandmother suggested that their family tie all their horses down in that nice valley. The men in the group had, however, obtained whiskey and a lot of them were drunk—even her uncle—and after they camped they kept on 'celebrating.' That night she was feeling very sick as it was almost time for her first child to be born. She couldn't sleep and would go out and sit leaning back against another lodge. While she was sitting there it was very dark, but she thought she saw two figures on horseback moving along the edge of the bluff, very, very, slowly, as though they were sneaking. So she went to her lodge and awakened her husband and told him she had seen strange men around. Of course it was very dark and she couldn't describe them so her husband didn't get excited and said: 'Oh, it is just some of our people.' She was still uneasy, however, and returned a couple of more times and told her husband what she had seen, but he didn't believe her nor pay any attention. A little later as she was lying fully dressed in her lodge, very uncomfortable—raising up, lying down, raising up again—not sleeping, she heard leaves rattling as someone walked slowly from the brush towards her lodge. Her uncle called her by name. She recognized his voice. He told her: 'All our horses are gone!' He had sobered up and had gone to see where the horses were. She just felt sick over it. They had lost all their beautiful horses.

"She was so mad at her husband, because he had been stubborn and hadn't given chase to the enemy, that she went out and walked and walked. She doesn't know how far she traveled in the dim moonlight when she heard a horse neighing and, since everyone knows his own horses when he hears them, she realized that it was the light buckskin horse, her husband's principal horse for hunting buffalo and for war. It was his best horse. She went in the direction she heard the neighing and the horse came towards her. It was all wet and had a short rope around its neck. She caught the horse and supposed that the enemy must have taken the stolen horses across the river and that this one must have been doing something that made them cut it loose. As she was leading the horse back to camp she saw something white lying there. She

231 got scared and ran to the other side of the horse. Finally she took
721 a big stick and threw it at the white thing and still it didn't move
so she went closer and found it to be a Hudson's Bay blanket just
soaking wet. The enemy must have used it when they crossed the
river. So she dragged it home to her lodge. When she got there
she called to her grandmother: 'Is he there?' Her grandmother
said: 'He is.' She was still furious at her husband and called to
him: 'Come out! I am giving you this,' and she said it in the way
people speak when they are giving something on return from war.
She was giving her husband his own buffalo horse! He however
didn't say anything or make any exclamation. This so enraged
her that she took the blanket and rolled it up as small as she could
and threw it at him, hitting him on the chest saying: 'Here is
another thing I brought you!' Then he laughed. But she had at
least saved one of the most valuable horses.

[431] "The next morning the rest of the Gros Ventres in the party
moved on, leaving this family behind. But fortunately some others
came along and seeing their plight gave them horses, for example,
Pemmican gave one to Coming Daylight, Little Shields gave her
uncle one, and Sleeping Bear gave her husband one."

231 The importance of various transactions could be gauged by
436 whether or not a horse were included, other things such as fancy
clothing, ornaments, guns, etc. being mentioned as "thrown in."
[554] A person who gave a horse in whatever connection accrued prestige
for himself and at the same time showed in what esteem the donor
[583] held the recipient. Horses were generally included in the bride
price; in inaugurating the more serious type of enemy-friendship;
in payment for services of the medicine man in curing certain
types of illness, and in payment to the ceremonial grandfather as
well as in payment to the namer or ear-piercer of a child; in
settling disputes; in gambling; in gifts to others in honor of relatives, and in meeting certain other kinship obligations.

231 Horses could be acquired by a man through raiding the enemy;
556 by gift from relatives and from non-relatives in honor of someone
else or in instituting the enemy-friendship; in the bride price of a
sister, daughter, or maternal niece; in payment for services
rendered; in gambling; through inheritance; in trading with the
whites. A woman might share in the bride price of her brother's

daughter, and might receive gifts from relatives, but would other- 231
wise have few opportunities of obtaining horses. 556

In former times the rules regarding inheritance were fairly
simple. If a man died, his relatives took the more valuable live- 428
stock, while anyone was free to come into the lodge and take any 768
other personal property of the deceased which was not to be buried
with him. The man's relatives would not, however, take the horses
which belonged to his wife or wives, or which had been given
before his death to his children. When a woman died she usually
would have little valuable property in any case, but, again, any
other woman might rush in and strip the lodge of whatever
personal property might be therein, including food. The close
family of the deceased were "so grief-stricken that they wouldn't
notice who takes what," and "a husband would never keep any-
thing of his wife's." It was said, too, that "women were braver [431]
than men in disposing of their property before death, and often
gave gifts of personal property to those they wished to have them."

In objects derived from the white man, the value put upon them 177
was mainly utilitarian. For example, in matching wagers on one 435
occasion a man put up a gold watch. There was no one on the
other side who had a watch to offer, but a spy-glass was considered
the equivalent. It was explained that the value of the watch in
dollars—whether it had a fine gold case or not—would not be
taken into consideration. The question in matching was to find
things of equal value to the Indian in his way of life. To illustrate
this The Boy told of a gift to his father, Lame Bull, from a white
trader on the Saskatchewan, of a hobble which locked. "Perhaps
this didn't have a high value in dollars, but it was considered extremely valuable by Lame Bull because it saved him many a race
horse. Even though the enemy might sneak a horse out of camp,
being unable to unfasten the hobble, he would have to abandon
the valuable horse before getting very far away."

On the other hand, while utility was certainly an important 435
consideration in the Gros Ventres' evaluation of goods produced
by themselves, various other elements were taken into account. A 554
horse procured from the enemy was perhaps the most valuable 231
of all things to the Gros Ventres; aside from other considerations,
a man would have risked his life to obtain it and that in itself lent

435 value. Thus any object captured from the enemy, no matter how
557 trivial it might be, was more valuable than a duplicate of that same
231 thing obtained in any other way, and could be used to initiate an
enemy-friendship, one of the most important of Gros Ventre transactions. A man who gave a horse, rather than or in addition to other items—to establish the enemy-friendship, to pay for the curing of a relative, to someone in honor of his relative, to his ceremonial grandfather for guiding him through the Sacred Dance, to wager in gambling, to show how much he thought of his brother-in-law in return for so simple a gift as the flesh of a puppy—would gain in prestige, for he thus established for himself a reputation for "being somebody."

435 The amount of labor that went into the making of an object,
such as the polished deer-hoof trimming on a robe, was an element
in its value. When the robe was old and worn the recipient thereof
[431] would remove the fringe and return to the donor "so she could
use them again." Scarcity, too, entered into evaluation of goods. Eagle feathers were, for instance, more valuable than other kinds of feathers. Again, as to elk teeth, it was explained: "The elk has only two teeth that are like ivory,[11] and so it takes a long time to
[237 accumulate them. They are to us Gros Ventres like pearls are to
307] the whites. They were our greatest decoration. They are valuable
even today, and, while imitations are sometimes used, you can always tell the difference."

## EXCHANGE AND DISTRIBUTION

439 There was actually no need for economic exchange within the tribe, with the object of obtaining the necessities of life, but a need had developed for exchange with the fur traders to obtain guns, whiskey, metal objects—kettles, scraper-blades, etc.—cloth, tobacco, beads, paints, and so on. After about 1830, the medium of exchange with traders was the buffalo robe, which rapidly increased in value at the expense of beaver.[12] Traders on the Missouri accepted other items produced by the Indians, but everything was equated in terms of robes.[13]

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[11] These are the rudimentary canines. Cf. Seton, v. 3, p. 5.

[12] Bradley, pp. 203–04.

[13] According to Denig, p. 421, an Assiniboine chief on Jan. 8, 1852, was

At this late date it was difficult to obtain in the field details of 439 exchange between the Gros Ventres and the white traders. One such transaction was recalled clearly by Coming Daylight, who remembered it because the amount given in return was relatively large. On this occasion, for 12 buffalo robes, the Gros Ventres received 2 striped blankets, 1 whole sack of sugar, 1 horse. If we compare with Denig's figures for a typical exchange in the 1850's where a horse was worth 10 robes, and 1 white, 3-point blanket was the equivalent of 3 robes,[14] we can agree that this was a good bargain. The same informant, however, remembers another occasion on which she herself gave the robe off her back to a trader in return for some apples which her little daughter craved. We have [273] no figures on the relative value of robes as compared with whiskey, but our data show that whiskey was highly valued by the Gros Ventres.[15]

So far as we have been able to find out, while the trade with the whites was carried on at every possible opportunity, the amount of intertribal exchange was relatively slight. Perhaps intertribal gambling contests would account for most of it. Coming Daylight remembers, however, one case where a Crow friend of her maternal uncle's offered him a race horse in exchange for elk teeth sufficient to trim a woman's dress. We lack details on other outside exchanges, but our informants mentioned that the Gros Ventres used to obtain abalone shells from the Nez Percé and also occasionally camas roots, but this latter was very rare. Denig mentions the abalone shell was earlier worth $20 (i.e. 6-7 robes), but that when the traders brought in so many their value dropped to $10.[16]

The head of the household was the one who bargained with the trader, but the materials he took in exchange were supposed to have been decided upon in view of the needs of the household as well as his own personal needs. If, for instance, one of his

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credited as follows: 30 lbs. of dried meat, 1 robe; 2 red fox skins, 1 robe; 1 large raw elk skin, 1 robe; 12 wolf skins, 4 robes.

[14] Denig, p. 420.

[15] Several of the traders remark that the Gros Ventres did not beg for whiskey as did the Piegan and others, but they were willing to pay for it. See Henry, v. 2, p. 734.

[16] Denig, pp. 590-91.

439 wives had vowed to cover a Pipe, undoubtedly he would try to include in his purchases the requisite length of black cloth. Individuals of course differed. In view of their labor, the wives would expect to share in the return therefor which the husband was able to secure from the trader, but this expectation was not always met.[17]

The items thus obtained were consumed by the Gros Ventres in the same ways as those goods of their own manufacture—some being directly consumed, some entering into further production, and some being exchanged on the principle of gifts and of payments for services, and in gambling.

A man would accumulate a surplus only to expend it as
554 generously as possible in order to attain prestige. The person with
431 a reputation for generosity rose in public esteem, and was in turn
439 the recipient of many gifts, whereas the man with only one horse
and only one wife could not afford to meet the demands for
hospitality and for generosity in other transactions, and thus could
not profit by the system of indirect and deferred exchange.

262 Sharing of food was an important element in attaining prestige
574 through generosity. A person known to be stingy with food would
554 lack status. The ideal was often preached to children embodied in
867 such statements as the following: "If you have visitors, even
though you don't have much food, give the last of it to them."

574 Should a male visitor drop in unexpectedly, the first thing a man did was to tell his wife to cook and she was expected to comply. How seriously this was regarded may be seen from the following case told by Singer: "One time my husband, Iron Bucket, went with a friend to visit the latter's brother. The sister-in-law was naturally a stingy woman and made no move to feed them. Her husband was sitting there fixing arrows and he told her: 'Hurry and cook. If you have nothing, ask for meat at one of the lodges.' This woman had a big shaggy head and sat there with her head bowed and her husband couldn't make her move. After a while, however, some meat was brought in from hunting, and this woman went out, got it and threw it down hard inside her lodge. She was mad. And instead of giving them in a nice way the manifolds and liver that they ordinarily eat first, she slung

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[17] For a case in point, see p. 178.

some liver at them and then put on the meanest part of the meat 574
to boil. Her husband didn't like it, and his brother who had
brought the visitor didn't like it either. Her husband picked up
the manifold and said: 'Some day I will see about this.' Her
brother-in-law said to her: 'Some day I might hear something 574
about you (meaning that she had a lover), and you will find out 684
that I am as mean as you are.' So it seems that not long after
that someone saw this woman with a lover and told her brother-in-law, who immediately filled his gun and went over to her and said: 'So I find you aren't as mean as you pretend to be. You are generous about some things. I heard things about you. I came to kill you.' The woman replied, very sassily: 'Well, kill me then!' and he shot her. When they told her husband she had been killed, he said: 'Well, it is all right. I would have done the same.'"

Etiquette was not so formal with women visitors as with men. 574
If a woman were hungry she would not hesitate to go to the lodge of a very good friend or relative and ask for food, with the reasonable expectation that the hostess would get busy and prepare something for her. Singer, herself, however, had the following experience, where hospitality was lacking. "One day a little dog came into my lodge carrying a piece of meat. I said: 'I am going to take the meat from that dog. I am hungry.' But my husband said: 'No, let the poor little thing have it, he is hungry.' I took it away from the dog anyway and then I said: 'Wait, I am going to beg some meat,' and I went over to a certain lodge. Two of that man's wives were out gathering wood and one was home. This one didn't even greet me but sat with her head bowed. I told her: 'I have come because I am hungry.' But still this woman didn't say anything at all. I sat there a long time. Finally a neighboring woman, who happened to be the man's daughter-in-law, came home with wood and looked in. She called me over to her lodge and said: 'What were you doing there?' I told her: 'I just went there because I was hungry and she never even talked to me.' So this woman cooked for me, fed me and gave me a piece of meat to carry home. When I was leaving she told me: 'They really have lots of meat, but they give me only the shoulder. As you leave you must hide this meat I am giving you up under

574 your arm because they always get after me if I feed any one.' So
as I was going along the other two wives were coming back with
the wood and saw me. They asked this third wife what I had
wanted and she said: 'She came here to beg.' They asked her:
'Did you feed her?' and when she said no, the other two scolded
her saying: 'You should have fed her at least a little bit' and
continued to bawl her out for being so stingy."

While not all individuals lived up to the standard of casual
hospitality, the majority seemingly did so, and business negotia-
tions were usually transacted while visiting.[18] The individual who
[554] dispensed food liberally could expect a return from others,
although not necessarily the ones whom he had fed. Furthermore,
if a man wished to sustain a good reputation he was expected to
entertain well. It was customary, therefore, when fresh meat had
been brought in for a man to tell his wife to cook and then he called
out: "So-and-so, come and smoke," to as many as he wished to
[554] invite. When the guests arrived he greeted each and assigned him
to a place in the lodge, the most honored guests being seated in the
back opposite the opening. After the guests had eaten, the host
filled the pipe from a plentiful supply of "mixture," and the smok-
[276] ing continued until the host gave the sign for dispersal by knocking
the ashes from the pipe.

553 On more formal occasions, such as a naming feast, the host
574 would ask some older man with a strong voice to act as announcer,
and in such case the latter would call out by name each guest and
say who was inviting him. Ordinarily a man would invite his own
age group, his close friends, but it was not customary for the wives
of the guests to come. If a woman wished to invite others, she
would go to the various lodges and invite them personally. In this
type of planned hospitality there was more in the nature of direct
exchange although it might be considerably deferred.

574 In addition to hospitality, ostentatious liberality accomplished
431 circulation of goods within the tribe. From the Gros Ventre point
of view: "Presents were usually given with the intention of doing
good and if no return were made, nothing was said or done. But
often it turned out that at some later time the recipient would say

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[18] Cf. Denig, pp. 514-15.

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to himself: 'He gave to me, so I'll give to him.' But no one was 431
in duty bound to give the equivalent in return."

Within the network of kinship obligations, exchange was more 602
often indirect than reciprocal. A man could expect help from his
father and from his mother's brother without being under obligation 431
to return goods in like amount—he was supposed to repay
them by conducting himself in such a way that they could be proud
of him. This meant that the man in his turn would be especially
generous toward his sister and her children, that he would
adequately fulfill his duties toward his wife's people and provide
goods in sufficient amount that his wife could fulfill her own obligations
especially those toward her own brother's wife and children.

When others saw fit to honor an individual, say for bravery in 554
warfare, that person was supposed to give away goods in large 431
amounts to show that he appreciated the honor; and his relatives
would join with him in giving, thereby increasing his, as well as
their own, prestige. Likewise in paying for services, such as those
of a medicine man, relatives would "chip in" to the best of their [602]
ability, the one assuming the largest part of the burden receiving
the greatest boost in public esteem. A person who impoverished
himself by giving generously at such times would be sure that, with
his reputation thus established, he would soon be the recipient of
gifts dispensed by others in like liberality. Meantime, however,
he could not afford to sit back awaiting the presents from others.
He would soon lose his coveted reputation and be referred to as [461]
lazy, an epithet strong enough to bring tears to the eyes of a man
who entertained any ambitions whatsoever.

If a person were in need, it was possible for him to request 426
what was necessary, preferably from some relative who was well-to-do, 558
and usually his request would be met. But a continual
borrower lost status and a limit was thus put upon indiscriminate
"begging." One woman stated: "If your sister asked you for
something you would not refuse her, but it was to your brother's
wife you would give things voluntarily. A woman had great pride
in keeping her brother's wife well-dressed, and if you had an [607]
extra supply of dried berries she is the one you would think of
first."

Thus we have the basis for the generalizations the Gros Ventres 431

Thus we have the basis for the generalizations the Gros Ventres
183 make about their own culture. The principle seemed to be that the more one gives, the more he gets. Coming Daylight explained:
431 "Those who are stingy don't come up, they just go back, back, back. Those who are generous gets lots of things. My maternal uncle was very generous and I try to follow his example. I feed everybody—old men, children and everybody—and people give me lots of things. Stingy people would eat all by themselves and nobody would give things to anyone like that."

The attitude is further illustrated by the following statement by Singer in explaining that the one selected as Feather Pipe Keeper had to give up everything he owned and would be sitting naked and bereft of all property: "Then his relatives and friends bring him things to live on. It is a great thing to give to someone like that. But these people kind of share everything and it holds back the ones that are prosperous. Our belief was that in a little while the ones who give have everything again. This didn't mean that a person could be lazy since it was 'thrown up' to anyone if he sat around and didn't work."

183 Again, according to Coming Daylight, "Formerly they all seemed to work in a bunch and work hard for a living. It seemed
431 like they were all one, and always helped one another and treated
476 one another to things, especially to something they thought the other person didn't have. If a bunch of women went out to pick berries, they helped one another with pounding. If they had hides to tan, others seeing the work going on came and helped and in no time the work was done. Even if they dug turnips, which are hard to get, should they have brought in a lot, they passed them around. If someone had no horse to use in hunting, someone loaned him one."

Mary Ereaux mentioned: "The Gros Ventres are great ones for sharing and that keeps the more industrious ones down. They are not as present as generous as they used to be because they would be entirely out. But even today if a woman brings you some berries, later on you give her some sugar or something she needs. That is the way they always lived and still do."

In payment for services there is no set "price," so to speak, but there was a gradation according to the kind of service rendered. If an older experienced woman were called in to design a new

lodge cover, the hostess provided food and there was no other 183
direct remuneration. If one sought knowledge as to how to use an 431
ordinary medicinal root, something was given in exchange, but in 476
a relatively small amount. On the other hand in compensation
for the services of a medicine man, not only was food prepared,
but in addition a much greater amount of property was given to [956]
the doctor, who in turn would see that those who had accompanied
him to help in singing at the cure, would receive some goods as
well. The amount offered to the doctor by the one paying for the
services was governed by the reputation of the medicine man as
well as by the individual's regard for his own reputation for
generosity. People would say: "Look how much so-and-so thinks
of his relative who was sick—he gave so much to the one who cured
him." If the patient were very ill a whole family might really
impoverish itself in paying doctors, were it necessary to call in one
specialist after another, as sometimes happened.

Although apparently there was a tendency to call on relatives to [602]
perform services—such as naming a child, telling a war story at
the erection of a new lodge, and so on—remuneration was forthcoming, although perhaps on not so large a scale as if a non-relative were called on to perform the same offices.

In addition to exchange of goods effected through generous
hospitality and the prestige-requirements of ostentatious liberality,
including payment for services, the distribution of goods within [525]
the tribe was aided by gambling. Wagers were matched by two
competing individuals and bet on an all-or-nothing basis. Considerable amounts of property changed hands at a single match.[19]

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[19] For a discussion of gambling among the Gros Ventres, see Flannery and Cooper, 1946.

# CHAPTER V

## WAR AND PRESTIGE

### ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF THE PARTY

721 554 Recognition was granted for any accomplishment that involved risk of life at the hands of the enemy. The constantly recurring attacks upon the Gros Ventres by one neighboring tribe or another offered many opportunities for the display of bravery, but those who joined in taking the initiative against the enemy had the greatest chances of accumulating impressive war records. Consequently parties set out at frequent intervals with the avowed purpose either of stealing horses or of avenging loss of Gros Ventre life.

721 Although it was not uncommon for two or three men to go off quietly together when raiding for horses, if a larger number was involved, some formalities were observed. The man who decided to lead a war party had his intention publicly announced around the camp circle by a crier and any who wished might volunteer to join him. A young man, untried in war, would hardly set himself up as leader in this way, but would be anxious to follow someone whose reputation for bravery was already well established.[1]

533 721 [782] Ordinarily, when the group was composed of ten or more men, there were some preliminaries the night before the party set off. The members gathered and sang in front of lodges of those they hoped would be able to help them. Each man so selected at least prayed for the success of the party as he gave them a smoke and fed them. In addition, if he had ammunition or clothing or something of the kind that would be useful on the expedition, he donated these to the party. It was said that an occasional man would "be so pleased with what the party was about to do" that he sent his wife out to sing with them. Thus the party sang around the camp circle in front of various lodges and, after agreeing on

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[1] Sometimes young men were restless and sang around the camp circle to indicate their willingness to go on a raid if someone would lead them. Such a song was recorded as No. 70.

what time they should meet the next morning to start off, they 721
dispersed.

Before leaving camp the next day, the party again sang in front 533
of the lodges which they had approached the night before. This same tune was also sung while the party was en route, words being composed to suit various occasions. This tune was known as the "men's song" and was said to have been given to the Gros Ventres by Nihiatu, the culture-hero. Other songs were also sung while the party was away from camp as, for example, on the first night out when they lamented their absence from friends and loved ones.

Various duties were assigned by the leader, and all, but especially 726
the youngest members of the party, were expected to do their part. If a young fellow were "lazy" on a raiding expedition, the leader would see to it that he was punished. An accepted way of accomplishing this end was on the sly to substitute strips of rawhide for the usual strips of meat in the container used by the young
man. When the party started to eat, all would watch this particular [626]
young man and, as he pulled out the rawhide, they would laugh at him. It was said that young men in this predicament would be so humiliated that they would actually cry. It was a serious matter at the time, and also offered good material to be used later by potential enemy-friends who might have witnessed this embarrassing situation.

Along this line, it is interesting to note the detailed procedure 726
of one man, which may or may not be typical of the behavior of 626
leaders in disciplining members of their party. "This particular leader, known as Eater, a contemporary of Running Bear, was highly respected and feared because it was known that when he led a war party he expected the other members to live up to the high standard he set by his own actions. If, however, he found that someone in the party was not doing his duty, in the evening he would start singing a song which he had acquired through a dream. All the young men would be apprehensive, wondering which of them was to be humiliated. The others would take up the song while Eater alone would dance, imitating a wolf by placing one hand on the forehead and the other behind him to represent the tail. He would circle around, dancing in this manner, until he came to the victim. Whereupon he would stop in front of the

726 latter and raise his leg in imitation of a urinating dog. All would
626 know then on whom Eater's displeasure had fallen, and the young
man in question would break down and sob. That would cure
him of laziness."

726 Among the important duties on a war party were those of the
water-carrier. If the mission were to be performed under more
312 than ordinarily dangerous circumstances, young men might volunteer
for the job, but usually the leader chose someone for it. A
water-carrier had to have courage and resourcefulness because in
order to fetch water it might be necessary that he be sent long
distances without guard, and then have to catch up with the group
[482 in case the rest had to move. When the members of the party
[534] sighted the water-carrier returning successfully bearing the skin
533] water-container attached to a pole, a song was sung by the war
party as they marked time by beating two sticks together.[2]

726 Scouting was another important aspect of a war party. The
leader selected two well-qualified men for this job. "They had to
have courage and endurance for, while scouting, they would run
instead of walk and not eat until their mission was completed."
[714] Scouts were called "wolves" and wore wolf-skins as insignia and
sometimes, at least, would stick brush on their heads so they could
not be so easily spotted against the horizon.[3] They went to high
[533] places to look around. If the enemy were not in sight, they might
sing, making up words to the tune mentioned as having been sung
before the party left camp.[4]

If the scouts saw indications of the enemy, such as smoke rising
from a coulee, but without actually seeing the enemy sufficiently
clearly to identify them, on their return to the party they gave a
wolf howl as they approached and proceeded in a sharp zigzag
path. If, however, they had more definite information, they gave
the wolf howl and approached in a circular path; that is, advanced,
turned in a circle, advanced again, turned in a circle, advanced
again, turned in a circle and halted. They were then met by two
older men who had been successful scouts in their day. While the
[533] scouts were approaching—occasionally looking back over their

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[2] Recorded as No. 130.

[3] For illustrations, see Curtis, v. 5, p. 176.

[4] Samples of this kind of song were recorded as No. 23 and No. 24.

shoulders and barking like wolves—the party sang three songs, one 726
to accompany the scouts as they made each circle.[5] [533]

The two older men who met the scouts were told by them privately what they had seen. The four then went to a mound of buffalo chips which had been piled up, the rest of the party awaiting the scouts standing in a semicircle—the women, if present, behind the men—and all facing the direction from which the scouts had come. They sang while the two warriors and two scouts [533]
circled the mound of chips four times.[6] After each of the two older men had recited his war deeds in scouting for and locating the enemy, they called upon the scouts to relate to the whole party the results of their expedition.[7]

It sometimes happened of course that there would be no time to go through the above ceremony if the enemy were approaching. But if time allowed it was done in that fashion.[8] Then the leader laid out plans to steal horses and/or get scalps, according to the news which the scouts had brought in. The leader would instruct the rest of the party where to meet after the raid, how long to wait there before starting for home, what signals he would use to indicate the moment of attack, and what signals of identification were to be used between members of the party should it be dark when they closed in on the enemy. It was stated that the Gros Ventres usually attacked in the evening after dark, whereas the Sioux were more apt to attack in the early dawn. Should the plans of the leader not seem satisfactory, some of the party might offer objections. The leader, feeling himself responsible for the safety of all members of the party, put forth his case, but the others were not bound to follow him and, if no agreement could be reached, the party
might split. One consideration which tended to keep the party [681]
together was, however, the fact that there was a fine paid to the rest of the party by one returning to camp ahead of the others.

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[5] A song without words, recorded as No. 14, accompanied the first circling. Songs at the second and third circling had words, composed by enemy-friends of the scouts, the words usually being both derisive and vulgar.

[6] This was recorded as No. 15.

[7] Kroeber's account, p. 191, differs slightly. Cf. also Curtis, v. 5, pp. 181-82.

[8] The formalities of scouting were carried out in detail during the ceremonies of the Sacrifice Dance. See Cooper Ms. 1949.

726 533 When close to the enemy, each member of the party unwrapped his war medicine in preparation for the real battle. While painting themselves and putting on their charms and other regalia, the warriors sang.[9] Lame Bull, for instance, had a "medicine" war bonnet and there was a special song without words which he sang as he donned it; if there was time, the rest of the party danced while he sang and drummed.[10] Other songs might be sung immediately before going into battle.[11] The words of one such song imply: "If I am killed it doesn't matter; women will bear other children to take my place; I am ready to die." Some individuals, too, had special songs of their own to be sung as they made the charge against the enemy.[12]

726 762 The most daring men in battle were said to have been those who wished to die. Men who were grieving over the loss of loved ones were believed to have been especially prone to this indirect method of suicide. Others took this way of gloriously ending their lives out of a sense of pique, or in order to vindicate their honor. In this latter case it was customary for a man who had something discreditable to account for, either on his own part or on the part of some member of his family, to publicly announce that he was [533] about to die by singing the "brave-song" or "death-song" as he rode around the camp circle. This indicated that he would seek the earliest opportunity of losing his life at the hands of the enemy while accomplishing some particularly outstanding war-deed.[13]

726 It was recognized that even the bravest of men might experience acute fear during battle. "Their souls kind of left them on [774] account of the danger. They looked different from normal and their minds seemed not quite clear. Lame Bull used to say that the effect was quite similar to that of drinking too much whiskey—

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[9] Kroeber, 1908, pp. 192–93 gives details and illustrations of supernatural paraphernalia for war. War medicines, illustrating those which had belonged to Bull Lodge, are presented here, Plate 3, courtesy of Richard Pohrt.

[10] The song recorded as No. 76 is Lame Bull's and is said to be typical of this class of songs.

[11] Two were recorded as No. 16 and No. 17.

[12] Lame Bull's song was recorded as No. 77.

[13] Two such "brave-songs" were recorded as No. 111 and No. 112. See also p. 191.

the mind was clouded for a while and a man could not remember 726 so well afterwards all that happened in the battle."[14]

The leader was constantly on the alert and tended to interpret 726 anything out of the ordinary as having a bearing on the success or ill fate of his party. As a case in point we have the following 787 account of an expedition in the 1860's. "Lame Bull was on a war party of which Big Beaver was the leader. They went to the Crow country hoping to find some hunters in the mountains. At the timber on the river not far from Crow Mountain, the party stopped near a big tree. It was during a thaw in the spring and after they had eaten, they took off their moccasins and hung them on the tree. Then they sat around and smoked and told stories. All of a sudden they heard an owl in the tree above them calling out: 'Where you are sitting under this tree, you are going to be killed.' The owl called again and said the same thing. Big Beaver said to his party: 'I've lived a long time. But never have I heard anything like this owl talking. Let's put on our moccasins and go fast. I think the owl is telling the truth. I think he knows what is going on and people must be near.' All quickly put on their moccasins, and, as they were putting out the fire and preparing to leave, they heard people yelling. Big Beaver gave instructions: 'Scatter. Don't go in file and don't step in the snow, but keep to the bare places so our tracks won't be seen.' So they ran away and soon reached the mountain. When they got to the top of the mountain, daylight had come. They looked down and saw people at the big tree where they had been, searching around for tracks. The Gros Ventres called at the other Indians to invite attack, but the others only stood and looked up, without trying to catch them."

If the war party happened to be near certain petroglyphs, 726 believed by the Gros Ventres to reveal the future, they went there 787 to read the omens. If they could not then interpret the markings, an offering was left there and the next morning they went again. 531 The markings on the rock were believed to change, and the predictions interpreted therefrom to be accurate. If the omens thus appeared too unfavorable, the whole party might even turn back.

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[14] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 201, 208, for remarks relating to war experiences of individuals.

726 787 769 Greatest reliance, however, seemed to be placed on the information that could be obtained through a "ghost-helper."[18] If a member of the party was known to have the power to command the spirit of a deceased member of his family, he was requested to exercise it. It was said that more often than not the predictions were extremely accurate, as in the following two cases, recounted by The Boy. The first one is estimated to have occurred sometime between 1835 and 1840 and The Boy's grandfather was one of the participants.

"The Gros Ventres were camped near the forks of the Teton and Marias Rivers. Practically all the men had agreed to go on the war path. So they left camp and on the first day arrived at the place where Crow Coulee or Creek empties into the Missouri. When it was dark someone said: 'Let's offer the pipe to that man and ask him to find what our prospects on this venture may be, good or bad.' They filled a pipe and presented it to the man, whose deceased father was proven to be his ghost-helper. He accepted willingly. Soon after they smoked, they made a shelter where he was to call his helper. Then they tied up the man and filled the pipe again and put it in the shelter along with him. He sang a song in which the others joined and on the fourth repetition they heard a voice up in the air. The ghost-helper arrived and the shelter shook. When he hit the ground, the ground shook. The ghost-helper was seemingly excited and kept repeating: 'What do you want, my children?' And he said also: 'If you were in my place and old as I am, and as feeble, you wouldn't like to be disturbed. But here I am. What do you want?' They said: 'We want to know how this trip is going to be—what luck we will have—what are our prospects?'

"They lit a pipe and offered it to the ancestral spirit. They could see from the flaring of the pipe that he was smoking it. Then the spirit said: 'Well, I don't know offhand. I'll have to look around. While I'm gone you smoke, and after a little while sing again. And I'll come back.' So they followed his instructions. When he came back they could hear the spirit catching its breath as an old man does and it said: 'My children, there are

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[18] For discussion of ghost-helper concept among the Gros Ventres see Flannery, 1944, also Cooper Ms. 1949.

Crow Indians without number invading the camp you just left. 726
They are so bold, knowing you men are away, that they are peeping 787
in the lodges watching your women as they are playing the 769
hand game. Your women are in happy mood.' Then the spirit said: 'These Crow Indians seem to be preparing to take all the Gros Ventre horses. I'll go back again and watch the Crows to see what they will do.' So they did as before, and when the spirit returned he said: 'The Crows have taken practically all of your horses and will arrive where you now are about sun-up. Don't be afraid of them, provided you do one thing: be sure to kill the Crow with the blue blanket coat. He is the only brave man in the crowd. Kill him first and you'll kill all the others. None of the Gros Ventres will be killed, but two will be wounded. In case you do not kill the Crow with the blue coat, the outcome of the battle will be doubtful.'

"It was nearing dawn by the time the spirit had made his final report, so the men decided to sit up and not sleep the rest of the night. At daylight, the leader sent two good men to the knoll about a half-mile away to look around. The scouts took a look, crawled back out of sight, got to their feet and ran toward the waiting men as fast as they could. The group had gathered buffalo chips in preparation of the usual ceremony of receiving scouts but the scouts yelled: 'Kick the pile of chips apart. There is no time for formality. Get ready to fight as quickly as you can—the Crows are right over that hill!' The Gros Ventres prepared hurriedly for battle and started for the knoll.

"One old man only was mounted, all the rest were a-foot. This old man was the one who threw the Crows into a panic because he had ridden to a high hill to watch the fight, and the Crows believed that they were going to be surrounded by mounted Gros Ventres. The Crows decided to dismount, make a stand, and let go the horses they had captured from the Gros Ventres. They selected high ground, one side sloping away with soft dirt, the other side grassy. The Gros Ventres were on the flat ground and so the fight started.

"While the main group of Gros Ventres engaged the enemy, a few followed a coulee until they got inside the Crow group and were able to kill a good many. The Crows decided to run, when

726 the man with a blue coat tried to hold them: 'If you run you'll
787 suffer a big loss. If you make a stand, the loss won't be so bad.'
But they ran right toward the thick mass of Gros Ventres, who
769 received them by opening up a lane for them. The Gros Ventres were afraid then to shoot on account of hitting their own men in cross fire. The man in the blue coat saw the situation and started to run shouting: 'I have no doubt I shall save myself, for I am a good runner. Do your best to try to get away now.' So he ran into the midst of the Gros Ventres, and right through them, passing his fellow-tribesmen until he was leading the fleeing Crows.

"Suddenly one Crow got brave and decided to make a stand and stem the pursuit by the Gros Ventres. He dropped back and pointed a gun at Bear Robe, but another Gros Ventre decided to attack him and the Crow was so terrified that he failed to pull the trigger until the Gros Ventre hit the gun. The shot tore Bear Robe's arm from the elbow to wrist and threw him off balance. When he recovered, the Crow was still there with his gun so Bear Robe ran up and snatched the gun and spear from the Crow and threw them away.

"The Gros Ventres were still pursuing the Crow, and another one made a stand. A Gros Ventre, Crow Moccasin, armed only with a tomahawk, struck him. The Crow staggered and dropped his gun, but grabbed Crow Moccasin's arm to which the tomahawk was fastened with a string. In the struggle the Crow reached for his knife and jerked Crow Moccasin toward himself and slashed his wrist, but he had jerked so hard that the string holding the tomahawk gave way and the Crow lost balance, then ran. Another Gros Ventre shot him down. The fight went on until the older men thought they should stop and let the Crows go. The one with the blue coat got away along with nineteen others. Forty Crow were, however, killed, and the only casualties suffered by the Gros Ventres were two wounded. It would seem that from what the ghost helper had told them, if they would have killed the man in the blue coat, they would have killed all of the Crow."

This second illustration refers to events of much later date, about 1875. "A Gros Ventre war party was camped east of Lewiston, across the Missouri River. Morning Star Arises was asked to consult his ghost-helper who reported: 'All right. I am

ready to tell you. First, here's the scalp of the Sioux you will kill 726
tomorrow.. [This was one strand of hair wrapped around a piece
of sage brush, symbolic of the scalp.] I've found a big Sioux 787
camp on Beaver Creek (east of the Little Rocky Mountains). 769
The Sioux are having a big Grass Dance and the one you are to kill tomorrow is having the most fun. He has a sword. You'll capture that sword when you kill him. Don't be afraid. There will be no Gros Ventres killed, but two of you don't look good to me.' The Gros Ventres asked that he name the two, but he refused, saying: 'Just don't be afraid. Go ahead to the place where the Sioux are and attack them. Choose what kind of weather you want to make your escape after the fight, and I'll see that the weather will be that way.' They failed to make a choice, but the spirit said: 'Take a look at the sun every once in a while tomorrow. There will be all kinds of sundogs tomorrow, changing every little while. If they appear, you'll know that I have told the truth.'

"The next morning they decided that only those with good horses should cross the Missouri and attack the Sioux. They approached the camp where the Sioux had spent the night. The Sioux had failed to extinguish their former camp fires, and the embers were blown into flame and the fire was extending toward their new camp. The Sioux decided to fight the prairie fire, laying down their arms, not realizing the Gros Ventres were watching them. The Gros Ventres then attacked. The Sioux were in utter confusion and ran, all of them except a man with a sword who made a stand. Two Gros Ventres, Comes A-Flying and Owl Old Man, tried to ride over this Sioux who, however, sidestepped them and struck both their horses with his sword; meanwhile the Gros Ventres struck the Sioux with their whips, thus counting coups. A third Gros Ventre, Crazy Bear, however,
killed him, took his scalp and claimed his sword. Since they had [727]
gotten this one scalp—which was sufficient for them to celebrate with a victory dance,—they returned. They saw the sundogs changing as the spirit had foretold. In order to evade the pursuit by the Sioux, they called on the man, whose ghost-helper had given the information, to change the weather. The man sang a song, using his robe as a cover to enclose himself, and said he

726 787 769 wanted a downpour of rain. At once a cloud appeared and in no time it was a big black storm cloud. Then there was a wind and a very heavy storm and thus the Gros Ventres got safely back to camp. The only loss on this occasion was that of two fine horses, one played out and the other foundered from drinking when overheated."

## RETURN OF THE WAR PARTY

727 After a successful encounter with the enemy, the homecoming was a joyful one, provided no Gros Ventre lives had been lost. As they approached the camp, appropriate songs were said to have been sung by the victorious party. If, for instance, they had stolen horses there was one type of song. On the other hand [302] when scalps had been taken, they sang other kinds of songs and painted themselves with charcoal. Incidentally, the Gros Ventres had a saying that "women and children do not make good charcoal." Women and children should be captured but not killed and scalped.[18]

When the victorious party arrived, they circled the outside of the encampment before entering. "Then the party broke, each member surrounded by his womenfolk who crowded around, kissing him and taking the scalps or other trophies which had been won. After a reasonable interval, the crier called all to come to [302] the center of the circle and dance. Men and women alike blackened their faces with charcoal, and the women, carrying scalps attached to poles, or weapons captured from the enemy, danced as innumerable victory songs were sung. Only members of the war party were allowed to join with the women in dancing. Many husbands, who had to stand on the sidelines, were jealous of the brave warriors at a time like this."

727 533 Most of the songs sung during the victory celebration had words which referred to encounters wherein the Gros Ventres had been successful. New words were often made up to commemorate a particular incident. One of these songs had the following words: "Where are you going? I've been here all the

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[567] [18] Cocking, p. 112, mentions in 1772 that the Gros Ventres adopted "slaves" of both sexes into families who had lost their children either by war or sickness.

time, thou with grey hair."[17] It refers to a particular Crow who had long grey braids. This man had captured some Gros Ventre women who were out picking berries and had returned to the Crow without having killed a man or stolen horses. His fellow-tribesmen taunted him with his "weakness" and in order to vindicate his honor he again sought out the Gros Ventres and was killed by them. The song was composed by the husband of one of the captured Gros Ventre women. 727 533

Another song, classed as a victory song, was composed by an old man whose faith in a younger man was justified. The young man had had a supernatural vision and, although he was as yet untried, he successfully led a war party.[18] Still another song was composed on the occasion on which a Piegan, who had survived a partial scalping, was killed by the Gros Ventres.[19] [787]

Even though the party might have succeeded in taking scalps, if any of their number had been killed, the return was a sad one. Whenever feasible they brought back the bodies of the slain from the field of battle. In any case, there was no circling of the camp nor singing. Nor was there a victory dance unless close relatives of the deceased warriors gave permission. An example to illustrate the procedure may be taken from the description of a serious encounter between the Gros Ventres and Sioux, known as the Battle of Black Butte which occurred in 1871 or 1872, upstream from the present site of Havre.[20] "There were approximately 30 lodges of Gros Ventres who were greatly outnumbered by the Sioux. Nevertheless, about 30 Sioux were killed and only one Gros Ventre lost his life. On the return of the party, the father of this one victim said: 'I give you charcoal. My son is lying on many.' So they were able to celebrate that victory in a big way."[21] 727

More often, however, when Gros Ventres were killed in battle, an outstanding relative of one of the deceased volunteered to or-

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[17] Song recorded as No. 19.

[18] This was recorded as No. 22.

[19] Song recorded as No. 106. Other songs used at the victory dances were recorded as No. 117, No. 118, No. 119, No. 123, No. 124.

[20] His own part in this encounter is described by Black Wolf in Kroeber, 1908, pp. 203–04.

[21] A song recorded as No. 91 was said to have been composed to commemorate this occasion.

727 ganize a revenge party. The Boy gave the following account of
the circumstances under which one such party was announced and
carried out. "The brother of Lame Bull's mother had been killed
in war by the Piegan. This woman took it very hard because it
726 was her youngest brother of whom she was particularly fond.
787 None of her relatives had taken any action and she was out on the
727 hills mourning. While she was out there she fell asleep and an
'old man' appeared to her and said: 'If you make an effort, you
will forget your grief. I will teach you a song that you will use
when they dance at the victory celebration after your people have
avenged his death. This song will be used when they bring back
the scalps of the enemies who have killed your brother.' So she
went home but didn't say anything about her experience for some
time. Finally, however, she told her husband. He then decided
to organize a war party to get revenge for his brother-in-law's
death. He had a big following as he went against the Piegan. On
the way, however, they came across some Blood Indians and killed
five of them, which was considered as fulfilling his duty to bring
backs scalps in retaliation. When the party returned, the woman
of course joined in the victory dance and sang that song, which
was then used many times after that when the Gros Ventres were
successful."

726 If no prominent relative led the revenge party, the parents of a
727 man killed in war could request some noted chief to do so. In
that case the one selected prayed for the success of the party himself
and made a sweatlodge, inviting many old men who would
likewise pray. The large number of offerings requisite for the
occasion were supplied, however, by the man who had made the
request. Should he not have the wherewithal to formally approach
a prominent warrior, there was still the possibility that revenge
might be volunteered by someone who pitied parents as they
grieved for their son. This would afford an opportunity for
some lesser man to legitimately set himself up as leader of a raiding
party for the first time.

### STATUS THROUGH WAR-DEEDS

554 Any action that involved risk of life at the hands of the enemy
was counted as a war-deed. Raiding for horses, especially for

those which were valuable enough to be tethered near lodges at night, was considered practically on a par with killing, scalping and counting coups. 554 Capturing weapons and other trophies, as well as taking women and children prisoner, were likewise deserving of praise. Helping fellow-tribesmen in danger and many other types of action such as successful scouting for a war party, or acting as water-carrier under dangerous circumstances, were taken into account in assessing the war record of the individual.

An ambitious man grasped every opportunity for distinguishing himself in as many of these ways as possible, for prestige depended primarily on a reputation for bravery, and competition between warriors was keen.[22] The ideal man was one who had so many war-deeds to his credit that "his wrist would be made slim from being pulled up to recite them." So great was the variety of circumstances under which a recitation of war-deeds was required, that a man who had accomplished little was of necessity ignored and doomed to remain a nonentity.

Furthermore there were many occasions on which those who had given a good account of themselves in battle were singled out for public recognition. During the victory dance, for instance, a warrior, who had remained at home, chose one of the returning party to whom he would offer a ceremonial smoke while singing his praises. Again, the relatives of a man who had behaved with particular heroism might decide to formally bestow a new name [553] upon him. In such a case, a group of men and women would approach the lodge where the naming ceremony was held, calling attention to the hero by loudly singing there. To show his appreciation of the honor the hero gave valuable presents to the singers. If a group approached a second time, the honor was doubled and so were the presents. In illustration, the story was told of a woman who was on one occasion so outstandingly brave during battle that she was accorded the same honor a man would have [562] been under the same circumstances,—she was given a new name, that of Woman Chief, and her praises were sung by three groups. Moreover, it was customary at the social dances of the Stars and of the Wolf-men, to compose songs referring to specific deeds of their members respectively, and to sing these over and over again.

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[22] For this and other aspects of status, see also pp. 32–33.

555 The more war-deeds a man performed, the more frequently was
342 he the center of attention. Gradually he began to rise above
others and finally he achieved recognition as an outstanding
532 warrior. Only when a man reached this enviable height was he justified in having his war record painted on his lodge for all the world to admire. When a newly painted lodge of this kind was first erected, the owner initiated its use by giving a feast to which other prominent warriors were invited. From among the guests, the host "pulled up" one who was able to tell four brave exploits, each connected in some way with a different lodge belonging to the enemy. At the conclusion of each separate account, the warrior who was reciting hit the taut new lodge a resounding blow, thus attracting attention. Then while the guests were feasting and smoking with the host, crowds gathered around to examine the lodge and to discuss the record depicted thereon. It was said, too, that similar discussions took place when the Gros Ventres met on friendly terms with other tribes. The reputation of the owner was thereby enhanced as his prowess was ever more widely acknowledged.

### ENEMY-FRIENDS

572 In accordance with the general prestige pattern, an outstanding warrior, or one who had aspirations toward that end, was expected to be generous as well as brave. Particular significance attached, however, to the disposition of horses stolen from the enemy or of weapons or other trophies obtained from the enemy at risk of life. The giving of such presents initiated a particular relationship be-
[602] tween recipient and donor known as the enemy-friendship. This was a kind of "joking relationship" and involved the greatest amount of freedom between the two both in word and action. Whatever one enemy-friend said or did to the other had to be borne with equanimity. Loss of temper involved loss of prestige, and it was said that in some cases one enemy-friend had to suffer patiently audacity which would have led him to murder another not in that relationship. Each tried to out-do the other by kinds of speech and action ranging all the way from the most harmless teasing and jokes to the most humiliating exposition of foibles and misdemeanors.

A man who was ambitious selected his enemy-friends with care so as to ensure opponents worthy of his efforts. It was said that often an older man whose reputation was already well established chose a spunky youngster. As The Boy phrased it, "This was an honor for the younger man and the older had nothing to lose. If the older continually won out over the younger in a fair 'fight' he ruined the younger man's reputation and thus eliminated a possible rival. On the other hand, if the younger man showed that he could take 'abuse' as well as give it, the older man could go along with him as an enemy-friend of long standing." 572

Everyone watched with interest the contest between well-matched enemy-friends whether they indulged in good-natured razzing of one another or whether they were concerned with more serious matters. When each tried to out-do the other in bragging of conquests both in love and at war, a large audience was attracted. Practical jokes were expected between them and the [522] more vulgar and obscene their nature, the greater the enjoyment. Whenever one enemy-friend thought he "had something" on the other, he hastened to expose him publicly, so that the enemy- [626] friendship often functioned as an effective means of social control.

When a man publicly taunted his enemy-friend, however, it was well for him to have ample grounds for the accusation lest the tables be turned against him as the case of Bull Lodge and Sits Like A Woman. This was told by The Boy.

"Sits Like A Woman was leading a war party out of camp as his enemy-friend, Bull Lodge, was returning from a hunt. Bull Lodge inquired of some members of the party as to who their leader might be. When he was told that Sits Like A Woman was the leader, Bull Lodge remarked: 'I'd hesitate to meet such warriors as yourselves were I the enemy, but Sits Like A Woman has no shame to lead such great men as you are!' Sits Like A Woman heard this and didn't forget it. The party was a very successful one, returning with 'charcoal' (scalps) and none of the Gros Ventres was even hurt. When they got home they sang around the camp circle here and there as usual. Bull Lodge at the time was entertaining many guests including his brothers-in-law who were seated near the entrance of the tipi. After Sits Like A

572 Woman had sung around the circle once, he led his party to Bull Lodge's tipi. The latter was suspicious and thought: 'I'm in for it now!' Sits Like A Woman went up to Bull Lodge, took him by the arm and said: 'Come, my friend.' He led him to the middle of the group of returned warriors. He then faced Bull Lodge and said in a jesting way: 'Stand still or I'll kill you.' Bull Lodge stood there and Sits Like A Woman took his rifle and, drumming with the stock on Bull Lodge's back, sang the following song: 'He who poisons (i.e., a medicine man with power to kill) has no penis.' Bull Lodge and his brothers-in-law realized that Sits Like [602 834] A Woman was in earnest because not only was the song a great insult, but the victim's brothers-in-law were present,—which they should not have been when any reference to private parts was made.[18] The war party took up the song with enthusiasm as Sits Like A Woman told Bull Lodge again: 'Don't move yet—I'll kill you anyway.' He took Bull Lodge's new Hudson Bay blanket and slit it in two; he slashed Bull Lodge's shirt and took it off him; he slashed his leggings and removed them; and finally he cut the belt so that the breech-cloth fell to the ground. Bull Lodge was standing there naked. By that time the brothers-in-law had stolen away, one by one. Bull Lodge knew better than to run away, and Sits Like A Woman said: 'Perhaps you have power to poison people. If you have a mind to poison me, go ahead and try. I'm *not afraid of you. If* you choose to pay me back that way, you might just as well try it on the sun. Or, if you choose to pay me back in the way I have treated you, go ahead. But first lead a successful war party. If you then do to me what I have done to you, I won't be mad. But I'll lead still another war party and do far worse to you that second time than I have done this time.'

"After thinking it over, Bull Lodge decided to buy off his enemy-friend and the next morning he got together an armful of valuable things, filled a pipe and went to Sits Like A Woman. 'My friend,' he said, 'here's a pipe I am offering to you. You take this pipe so you will stop doing things like this to me. While I don't mind it, my brothers-in-law were there. And here are some things you can have.' Sits Like A Woman laughed, but ac-

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[607] [18] Relationship between brothers-in-law precluded any reference to sex and bodily exposure in each other's presence. See pp. 118–19.

cepted the pipe and gifts. Two days later Sits Like A Woman 572
told his wives to cook and had the announcer call out: 'Bull Lodge, your friend Sits Like A Woman is inviting you to his lodge to smoke.' Others were likewise invited and when Bull Lodge arrived he was put in the place of honor. After they had eaten a good meal and had started to smoke, Sits Like A Woman said to Bull Lodge: 'My friend, you can rest assured that I'll never do that to you again. I went to that extreme because you told some of my party I was not fit to lead them. But I showed you what kind of a man I am. You are intelligent and I don't think you'll make a mistake like that again. Also its good you didn't get mad but took what I handed out to you. You probably regret the blanket and clothes I cut up. So here are my best clothes—you can have them.' Then, indicating his best race horse, he added: 'Lead that horse home and keep it.' Thus Sits Like A Woman publicly absolved Bull Lodge, but by heaping gifts upon him so generously he exposed him too."

If enemy-friends were relatives, usually they were of opposite 572
sex and the joking aspects, rather than the spirit of rivalry, were
predominant. Should the enemy-friendship be inaugurated be- 602
tween two relatives who otherwise were expected to be reserved in 522
each other's presence, somewhat more freedom between them was permitted, although the taboo on reference to sex was said to have been strictly maintained.[34] Among other examples of this type of enemy-friendship, Coming Daylight gave the following from her own experience. "My husband's nephew, Crazy Bull, one time presented to me a horse he had captured from the enemy. Before that time we had always properly avoided speaking to each other unless it was necessary, but now we were enemy-friends and we could play jokes on each other and he would tease me, too. One time, for instance, during the night he piled up a big load of firewood just in front of the entrance to my lodge. He had hoped that when I went out in the morning I would open the flap and go out head foremost into the wood and lose my temper. He was there watching to see what would happen, but unfortunately for him, my grandmother was the first to venture forth and so the trick miscarried and counted for me rather than for him. I never liked

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[34] For details on kinship behavior, see pp. 107–26.

572 to play jokes, but I would get even with him by going over to his
602 lodge when I would hear him abusing his wife. He had to stop
522 when I came in there because if I actually caught him at it, I could
dub him a wife-beater or worse in public."

While in most instances the enemy-friendship was initiated by
562 men, women occasionally obtained war trophies on their own, and
572 had the same privilege. The following, told by Singer, illustrates
how she herself came by some war trophies and the manner in
602 which she disposed of them. "One time, when the Piegan had attacked us and the Gros Ventres were pursuing them, I dashed out with some of my women relatives. We came upon three Piegan who had just been killed. Those other women stopped to hit them but I rode by more slowly and spotted some booty near one of the bodies. I dismounted and picked up a nail-studded belt to which was attached a scabbard containing a knife and a nicely beaded gun case. I didn't want to show these to the others, but when they taunted me because I failed to count coups as they had done, I showed them this belt. One of them grabbed the scabbard, which I had intended to give to my own husband, saying: 'You are giving me this. Now we are enemy-friends!' To my nephew I later gave the gun case, saying as I threw it down in front of him: 'Here. You could have this for your gun. This is what I took in war.' The knife I threw down in front of my grandmother and, because we were now enemy-friends, I used a 'bad' name for her—I called her 'you who don't wipe your behind.'"

## CHAPTER VI

## KINSHIP BEHAVIOR

**Much of the more formalized behavior expected between particular categories of relatives among the Gros Ventres has survived the many changes in their economic, political, and religious structure. It is one of the few aspects of their older culture which can be observed as functioning at least partially. Although the economic side of the obligations has had to be reduced markedly under modern conditions, the attitudes accompanying avoidance and joking are still deeply ingrained in those of middle age and in older persons.** 602 [178]

All in all, the type of behavior which indicated respect was extended to include by far the greatest number of relationships,—freedom being allowed only between those individuals considered to be related as grandparents and grandchildren, as siblings of the same sex, and as in-laws of opposite sex but of the same generation.

### PARENTS

The parent-child relationship was characterized by a kind of reserve that tabooed any light talk, especially joking about sex or marriage. If the subject were approached in a serious way, however, it could be discussed between parent and child of like sex. A woman could, for instance, go to her divorced or widowed mother and tell her: "So-and-so wants you, will you not go and live with that man?" But she would not think of acting as intermediary in such a proposal to her father. 593

Throughout life children were supposed to address and to refer to their parents only by relationship terms,[1] never by personal name. Further, a son would be shamed by any incident even remotely connected with sex, in which he was involved, should it be [60] 55[]

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[1] The kinship terminology given by our informants agrees in detail with that in Kroeber, 1902, p. 9.

593 alluded to or occur in the presence of either his father or mother.
To appear unclothed in each other's presence would be embarassing
[291] to father and son alike. A woman refrained from any conversation or action that would call the attention of her father to the
fact that she was menstruating or pregnant. An example of the
[845] attitude in this regard came to attention recently. "A woman, who was walking along the road near her house one evening, suffered a miscarriage. Instead of being taken to her own house nearby she insisted on being taken to a neighbor's, her reason being that her father and a few of his friends had been at her home when she had left and she would be 'ashamed' to appear in front of him in her condition."

It would seem that in some ways mothers had closer ties with their daughters and fathers with their sons. If, for example, parents disagreed about something their children did, each took up for the child of like sex. A man said to his wife: "You leave the boy alone, he's *my* boy," and a woman would say the same regarding the daughter. Or had a child done something to disgrace the parents, the wife was likely to upbraid her husband, if a boy were the culprit, by telling him: "Your son did so-and-so!" Should
[597] the daughter have been at fault, her father would speak in similar
vein to his wife. In cases of adoption, too, a woman claimed a girl and a man, a boy.

On the other hand, in circumstances where parents could publicly show pride in their children, it often happened that a woman gave presents away in honor of her son and a man in honor of his daughter. It was customary, too, that if a young man had done something especially noteworthy at war, anyone could approach his mother and ask for whatever was wanted, and she would give it. Middle-aged women, whose sons were in World War II, joked with each other along these lines when news of their sons came from the front. Unfortunately, however, adverse economic circumstances precluded the full carrying out of the custom.

604 Attitudes of respect and reserve between parents and children
601 are extended to include all of parents' siblings and their spouses,
special emphasis being put on father's sister and mother's brother. Kinship terms reflect this situation. The term "father" includes father's brother, male cousin, mother's sister's husband; "mo-

ther" includes mother's sister, female cousin, father's brother's 604
wife. This was neatly illustrated in an instance given by Mary 601
Ereaux. "My mother's cousin's husband came to my house a few weeks ago and wanted to ask me something about arrangements for the pop concession at the Fair. It was a matter of serious business and he and I stood, each looking in a different direction,
talking only about the matter in hand. After he had left, my son- [582]
in-law, who is not an Indian, and who does not understand the Gros Ventre language, said: 'Mother, you looked as though you were mad at that man.' So I told him: 'In the Indian way, that man would be the same as my father, because his wife would be in the same relation to me as my mother, so we never talk unless necessary and never look at each other while talking.'"

The term "aunt" is reserved for father's sister and female cousins, and "uncle" for mother's brother and male cousins. Here, too, heightened reserve characterized the cross-sex relationship. "A man would not address his 'aunt' directly unless by chance she would be the only one there and he needed information. He would under no circumstances linger to make conversation with her. The same for a woman and her 'uncle.'"

### Parents-in-law

The respect between members of the opposite sex who are of 606
contiguous generations was most apparent in the avoidance between mother-in-law and son-in-law. This required that the two neither look at nor speak to each other at any time. It was stated that some men disregarded these rules after the death of the wife, "but most used to keep them all the time." There was one case mentioned in which the son-in-law of a very old woman told his wife: "Your mother is getting very old now. We won't see each other much longer anyway. It would be all right for your mother to come in to our lodge." Both Coming Daylight and Singer insisted nevertheless that, should such a proposal be made, the son-in-law would be the one to make the initiative, never the mother-in-law.

The avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law was almost as strictly observed, in that a woman could not look directly at her father-in-law when she spoke to him, and she did not even speak to him if it could be avoided. A man showed about the same degree of reserve to his father-in-law as he would to his own father, and a woman to her mother-in-law as to her own mother. Traditionally, a son-in-law was supposed to treat his parents-in-law well in the sense that he would send them a large proportion of the proceeds of his hunt. A woman would take the meat to her mother saying: "This is what your son-in-law sends you." Frequently the mother of the woman selected the choicest parts of this game to send as a return gift to her son-in-law. Parents-in-law were expected to publicly show pride in the achievements of their sons-in-law to about the same extent they would in those of their own sons. One especially nice way of showing appreciation of a good son-in-law was for his mother-in-law to make for and formally present to him a fancy robe and decorated moccasins to "dress him up" for dancing and for other occasions when finery was displayed. It was not uncommon, too, that shortly after marriage the bride's father would give a feast to which he invited his son-in-law, along with a number of his own friends, in order to "show his son-in-law how to observe the laws of hospitality and generosity in food." Later on, of course, a man would then once in a while include his father-in-law among those whom he invited.

Furthermore, a woman was supposed to be very generous to her son's wife in the way of keeping her supplied with berries and so on. Yet reciprocity was not expected, as illustrated by Cora's remark: "Most of the time it is the mother-in-law's place to do a lot for her son's wife. But I used to give berries and other nice things to my husband's mother, and she would laugh, because in the old days it would have been the other way around." And Coming Daylight's experience with her own daughter-in-law reveals something of the attitude in former times. Coming Daylight said: "I like my sons' wives just as much as I do my sons themselves. In fact I love them just as dearly as I do my own children. One time when I returned from working near the present Fort Belknap, the wife of my eldest son brought me some berry soup along with a big sackful of berries she had just gathered. I was so touched I said: 'You kill me but you don't kill me,' which is the equivalent of saying it was wonderful for a daughter-

in-law to do anything of the kind for her mother-in-law. So I 606
gave that daughter-in-law two horses."

Although economic obligations were not incumbent, the relationship terms were used, and avoidances practiced, between parents-in-law and the brothers and sisters of the man and wife respectively. It was explained: "The brothers of a man respected
his mother-in-law because in the old days it could happen that if 587
a man died his brother might take the wife. And the same with a woman, because they had the custom of giving all the girls in a family to the same man if they liked him."

### SIBLINGS OF OPPOSITE SEX

Among members of the same generation, the most marked re- 593
spect was exhibited between siblings of opposite sex, and was ex-
tended to include all cousins. There was no relationship term for 605
"cousin," all using sibling terms of address and without distin- 601
guishing between parallel- and cross-cousins.

Since a girl was removed from her own family at an early age and was brought up in a different household, actual face-to-face contact between brothers and sisters was slight. Nevertheless, their attitudes toward each other had important consequences with many ramifications. As interpreted by the Gros Ventres, the basic relationship between siblings of opposite sex gave clues to understanding expected behavior in several other categories of kinship, —in the avunculate and amitate, as well as in the relations between in-laws of the same sex and generation.

If it could possibly be avoided, brother and sister did not speak to nor look directly at each other. They communicated through a third person. Gros Ventres, who are today in middle age, explained how embarrassed they were as children when the authorities did not understand "the proper way of doing things." For instance, the good sisters and priests in charge of St Paul's, which at that time was a boarding-school, insisted as a privilege for the boys that they visit their sisters on Sunday afternoons in the girls' part of the school! How deeply this feeling of respect penetrates was brought home to the present author by the following incident. One day she was with Mary and Coming Daylight, while waiting for Charles Buckman, who was to drive her to another part of the

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Reservation. She heard the car drive up and, without thinking how it might be interpreted by the other two women, exclaimed: 'Oh, there is my man! I must go!' Since in that neighborhood 'my man' is commonly used to indicate husband or lover, Mary laughed. Almost immediately, however, she caught herself and straightened her face, remarking: 'I shouldn't have even thought that or laughed like I did. That man is my cousin and I should be ashamed of him.' Furthermore when Mary went out with her to get in the car, Charles insisted that Mary sit in the back seat so that everybody could see that they rode in the same car only to accommodate the white woman. Mary remarked later on: 'It is funny, but I just can't bring myself to sit down and have a conversation with my men-relatives, like white brothers and sisters do. I still have a feeling it is an awful thing to talk to my brothers, male cousins, father-in-law and Indian sons-in-law,—although I don't mind in the least talking to my white son-in-law.'"

Brother and sister were expected to grant each other's requests whenever it was in their power to do so and without complaint, regardless of the inconvenience which might be involved. The following incident illustrates how sensitive the Gros Ventres were on this point. "When the present Mrs. Takes-the-Bow was a small girl, she often was sick. One time her father's sister came into the lodge and muttered to herself: 'Oh you are just using up all my medicine in doctoring you—what is wrong with you!' Unfortunately the child's father overheard this impatient comment and was deeply hurt, because very seldom would a woman say anything like that in front of her brother. So he decided: 'My sister considers me a lot of trouble, and if that is the way she feels about it I shall never request her services again.' He meant exactly what he said. He left immediately to go on a war party. Careless of his life, he recklessly rode into the midst of the enemy and was killed."

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721
One way of showing how much a woman thought of her brother was for her to make offerings in his behalf. When young men were going off on a war party, the sister of one of them might go outside the lodge and make a promise along the following lines: "I will give my finger as offering if my brother will come back a great warrior." It was considered a great honor, of course, to

have someone come back a real hero, and, although such a promise 593 to torture oneself could be made in regard to other relatives, "it was usually a sister who thought so much of her brother who did 728 that." Other forms of sacrifice which a girl might practice on her 721 brother's behalf would be to take a fine robe, or something else of value, and stick it on top of the lodge saying: "I offer this that my brother may come back with good luck, bringing something fine from war." This could be even more specific in that a girl could offer, say, the tip of her finger, if her brother would bring back a particular thing, such as a scalp or a horse or a weapon. Again, should her brother be ill or wounded, a woman would be exceedingly concerned and might go so far, as in one case recorded, of promising that if he should recover she would join the Women's Lodge—" which was considered a great thing to do for your brother."

Usually a man would have some voice in regard to his sister's 593 marriage and, if he were the one who made the arrangements, he received the larger share of the bride-price. It was said, too, that [584] a brother would be especially concerned regarding his younger sister's moral conduct and might take it upon himself to keep her in line. Although parents would feel the disgrace of an erring daughter, a brother was expected to react violently. If her hus- [684] band failed to punish his wife for adultery, her brother could kill her. Some instances were given, too, in which the man took his own life indirectly, by riding into the midst of the enemy without taking any precautions, because he felt so keenly the dishonor his sister who was unfaithful had imposed on him.

### MATERNAL UNCLE AND PATERNAL AUNT

"Because a brother and a sister thought so much of each other, 604 they were expected to be good to each other's children." If a woman had several brothers, it was the eldest who assumed the duties of the maternal uncle and his relationship with his nephews was a direct one. Should the eldest brother be unable to undertake the responsibility another brother or male cousin was expected to do so.

The maternal uncle was supposed to watch his sister's children 604 closely even though her husband was on the scene. If he did not 861

604 861 approve of the way they were being raised, he could remove a sister's son from the parental home and keep him. The parents would have to let him go. Thick told of his own experience in this regard. One day at the time when he was nine or ten years old, his mother's brother came and told his brother-in-law: "I am taking my nephew. You folks are not training him to be a man." So his uncle took Thick away and raised him very strictly. He was made to work very hard and his uncle did not hesitate to lecture him and to administer severe tongue-lashings. His uncle's wife would occasionally intervene in the attempt to bring about a more lenient attitude toward the boy, especially as Thick got older, but all to no avail. Finally, when Thick had become a young man, he could not stand it any longer and rebelled. He has never forgotten that after all those years of what amounted practically to servitude, his uncle did not give him a single horse nor any other presents, although he showered Thick's elder brother with good things, especially with horses.

604 In case the maternal uncle was well-off, and his sister and her husband in bad straits, the uncle was more or less obliged to take the responsibility for his nephew. If he did not do so, people would say he had neglected his duty. Furthermore, if a boy were
[855] lazy and consistently refused to obey his own father, he might be ejected from his home, and it would be up to his maternal uncle to take him in. One case was cited, too, of a boy who was neglected by his parents, and whose uncle not only took him in, but acted as though he thought more of his nephew than he did of his own sons.

Whether or not the maternal uncle insisted on taking full charge, he had the right of disciplining his nephew, reprimanding him when he failed to measure up, but at the same time he had the obligation of protecting and shielding him in public. While a father could, and sometimes did, disown his son, the boy could be sure of a refuge with his mother's brother, although he faced severe punishment in private at his uncle's hands. Thus a young man who was in difficulties, over say a love affair, would seek out his uncle. Should he be threatened by a husband who suspected the young man of fooling around his wife, the uncle could be counted upon to invite the irate husband, smooth over the situation, and in case of necessity pay the indemnity. Other people might say to a 604 man that it was of no use to help that nephew, that he was no good. Yet the uncle did not give up trying to save face for the nephew, and to do his best to shield or rehabilitate him—but at the same time he "talked turkey to him."

Even after a man was married, his maternal uncle had the right of disciplining him. If a husband mistreated his wife undeservedly it was said that his maternal uncle could step in and take the [684] wife temporarily away from his nephew, letting him shift for himself, doing his own cooking and so on, "until he came to his senses." A man would have to take such treatment from his [626] uncle, it was said, because public opinion condemned the husband and backed up the uncle, who was considered within his rights.

Furthermore the maternal uncle would feel duty-bound to protect his nephew from danger. An extreme case was cited in illustration. "A Gros Ventre boy was captured by the Crow when fairly young and he remained among them after he grew up although he could have returned. On one occasion the Gros Ventres surrounded a war party of Crow among whom was this young Gros Ventre man. The young man appealed to his mother's brother to save his life, and the uncle responded by using every [illegible]ument he could think of. The other Gros Ventres in the par[illegible]d the plea, however, on the grounds that the boy had previ[illegible] had the opportunity to return to his own people, and asked: 'Why didn't he think of his uncle then?'"

On the other side of the picture, if a young man were successful and "on the way up," as the saying goes, his maternal uncle had priority over the boy's father or older brother in helping him by [431] giving generously to him in private and by giving away publicly in his honor as lavishly as possible. It was stated, for instance, that if a young man was ready to go to war, his uncle might go to him and give him a horse, encouraging him to face the enemy bravely and to show courage under fire. He would tell his nephew: "I'm going to watch you. Here is your chance to show what you can do." Thus he might "steal the show" from a father or older brother who themselves might have intended to help the boy off to a good start. Because it was the uncle who did this, nothing would be said. All his relatives would be proud of a successful young

604 man, but his maternal uncle would be given the greatest amount of credit for his nephew's prowess, and he would rejoice more than the others in his nephew's successes.

426 A nephew could, if he wished, use his uncle's property without asking permission. If he damaged the property so borrowed, how-
604 ever, the uncle might reprimand him severely. Sometimes an uncle took the initiative and told one of his nephews: "All that I have is yours." In such a case, not only would the nephew be free to use the property without asking, but even if it were damaged—say a borrowed horse was carelessly injured or lost,—nothing would be said by the uncle nor any punishment inflicted. A nephew was supposed to be very respectful toward his uncle, but was freer with him than he could be with his own father. He could, for instance, joke with his uncle about being a lady's man, but he
[834] could not go too far in referring to sexual matters. He would not
[291] feel quite so embarrassed if his uncle should happen to see him unclothed, as would be the case with his father or his brother-in-law, but he would be far from comfortable in that situation.

604 The relationship between a man and his sister's daughter was not as direct as that between him and his sister's son. If a woman died, leaving orphan girls, it was not unusual that the wife of her brother would say: "I am going to take these girls so that I can have a son-in-law through them." This is what happened to Coming Daylight and her sister, whose maternal uncle took responsibility for them, although they were actually trained by his mother. It was he who arranged their marriages and it was to him they returned when widowed or divorced. His sons took the place of brothers to these two orphans.

While he did not take on the role of disciplinarian to his sister's daughters, whether or not their parents were living, the maternal uncle was expected to be generous to his nieces and to show his regard by giving things away in their honor. If a maternal uncle asked a niece for anything she possessed, she was supposed to give it to him without question, even though at considerable cost to herself. "Coming Daylight was asked by her uncle for the elk teeth she owned, to exchange with a Crow who had offered him an excellent race horse in return. She gave up these valuables without a word, though she hated to part with them since she did not know

at the time whether she would ever have a chance to acquire more 604
of these highly desirable decorations." On the other hand, a maternal uncle would not refuse his niece or her husband anything it was in his power to give, and would always lend them horses or other kinds of property when requested.

Compared with the responsibilities of the maternal uncle, a paternal aunt had relatively few obligations to her nephews and nieces but correspondingly more to their mother, her brother's wife. Nevertheless it was she who took particular interest in her brother's children when they were infants. She showed regard for her brother by providing, if possible, the sack for the newborn [854]
baby and the goods to pay the medicine man in case it were necessary to call one to the child-bed of her sister-in-law. If the child became ill she, too, usually paid for the necessary doctoring and it [553]
was not unusual for her and her husband to assume the expense of a formal naming feast for the infant.

The paternal aunt had the duty of "bawling out" her brother's [861]
daughters if they misbehaved. In regard to property, a niece would have to ask permission before using anything of her aunt, but the request was always granted. The aunt would tell her niece in an offhand way: "Well, why don't you go get it!". Whereas if someone not in that relationship had made the request, she would have gotten the object and handed it to her. A woman was expected to be as reserved with her aunt as she would be with her own mother and with her mother-in-law. A man was even more respectful to his aunt in the sense that he would not speak to her unnecessarily nor look directly at her.

When a girl married, the paternal aunt sometimes participated [583]
in the bride-price, and claimed her niece's husband as "son-in-law." According to Garter Snake: "When Otter Robe's oldest sister married, the groom gave three horses, one of which went to the bride's father, one to her brother, and the third to her father's sister. The latter made for her niece's husband a fine fancy robe, treating him with the same consideration she would have accorded her own daughter's husband. Then, when this 'son-in-law' returned successfully from a raiding party, he gave his 'mother-in-law' one of the horses he had captured." It is interesting to note

604 that the wife of a maternal uncle may likewise claim his nephew as "son-in-law."[8]

### BROTHERS-IN-LAW AND SISTERS-IN-LAW

607 The mutual regard between brother and sister is said to have been reflected not only through the carrying out of the obligations of the avunculate and amitate in the spirit of "showing how much brothers and sisters thought of each other." It could also be seen in the type of behavior expected between brothers-in-law on the [522] one hand, and sisters-in-law on the other. Brothers-in-law were [831] generous to each other and could joke lightly with each other, but nothing even remotely connected with sex could be so much as mentioned in each other's presence. A man was circumspect in regard to his sister's husband out of respect for his sister, and to his wife's brother because the latter, out of respect for his own sister, had similar obligations toward him. Sisters-in-law behaved toward each other in like fashion. These attitudes were extended to include wife's brother's wife as "sister," rather than "sister-in-law," and husband's sister's husband as "brother."

Unmarried brothers of a man and wife likewise regarded themselves as brothers-in-law. A case which well illustrates the attitudes between them is the following as told by The Boy. "My older brother was married to Thick's older sister and we two young unmarried brothers-in-law experienced a most embarrassing situa- [837] tion. One of us was visiting a woman at night and the other came to the same woman, not realizing in the dark that his brother-in-law was already there. We recognized each other's voices, however, and the one who arrived last beat a hasty retreat. The matter has never, even to this day, been discussed nor so much as indirectly alluded to between us, and the embarrassment over this event led us to avoid each other for a considerable time thereafter. Eventually our relationship was deepened inasmuch as Thick married my sister. Even though my sister should die, Thick and I would continue to be brothers-in-law on the same plane."

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[8] Kroeber, 1902, p. 10, calls attention to the identity of terms for "niece" [601] and "daughter-in-law." Apparently a woman used the term "son-in-law" for her niece's husband or for her husband's nephew only if presents were given.

Traditionally, all reference to sex was forbidden between brothers-in-law in private as well as in public. They would be embarrassed at bodily exposure in each other's presence and consequently did not go swimming together, nor relieve their bodily necessities in sight of each other, nor indeed break wind. They were, however, allowed and even expected to joke with one another, or, better, to mildly tease each other in public. This sort of "joking" was of a very different kind from that expected between brother- and sister-in-law or between enemy-friends. As an example, it was stated that a man might say to a prospective employer, when his brother-in-law was present: "I'm the best logger around here. My brother-in-law can't cut logs as well as I can. Why hire him?" The other was supposed to take such ribbing without losing his temper, but try to get even at some later date. 607 834

Among the younger generation of today, brothers-in-law still "josh" at each other's expense and in good nature, but they tend to disregard the respectful attitudes and to discuss tabooed subjects. Deploring this state of affairs, Coming Daylight commented: "These young men around here now are 'tough' just like the Assiniboine men always were. The Assiniboine never were ashamed in front of their sisters' husbands, whereas the Gros Ventres were different and knew better than to behave in such a way." 607

Even at the present time, nevertheless, just as in the past, brothers-in-law are supposed to be generous with each other. They would advise each other in regard to a good business proposition, give each other the benefit in anything along that line, help each other in such ways as in building a house, in giving presents away in public, and so on.

Reticence on matters connected with sex was practiced between sisters-in-law, a woman being careful what she said both to her brother's wife and to her husband's sister. It was stated, for example, that "a woman can tease her sister-in-law, but not in a bad way because she would be her brother's wife." The stock joke between sisters-in-law hinges upon stinginess. A woman could say to her brother's wife: "Oh, you stingy thing. You hid your knife," which would indicate that she is fond of her food and doesn't wish to share it. But sisters-in-law do not josh each other to the same extent as do brothers-in-law.

607 A woman was, however, expected to be especially generous to her brother's wife. Coming Daylight gave, as example, her own experience at the time of her first marriage. "One day, shortly after I had arrived at my husband's home, his sister, Watches All, brought me a couple of skins saying: 'Now you take the flesh off these hides. 607 You are known to do a good job, and since my eyesight is poor I might cut the skin.' So I did what was asked, 431 never dreaming that one of these skins was to be a robe for me. Some time later Watches All invited me and another young woman who was married to my husband's cousin, to a lodge. When I arrived I found the lodge full of old women. I was told to go around to the place of honor in the rear, where two robes were placed. When the other young woman arrived, they told her to take her place beside me. We were both to sit beside the robes and not to rise until they were all through. Watches All had invited, among the others, the woman who had 'initiated' her and who acted as a sort of teacher. Watches All said to this woman: 'You are going to initiate my sister-in-law with this robe.' So they made a smudge and Watches All held one side of the robe and the woman held the other, as they stood behind me. Then they held the robe toward the fire three times, making the motion as though to put it about my shoulders, and on the fourth time they actually put it around me, tying it at the breast and telling me not to hold it on with my hands. Each of the four times the motion was made, the woman blew on the robe spraying it with a powdered root which she had in her mouth. Then they went through the same procedure for the other bride. Finally, we were told to walk out without picking up our old robes, which we had left by the door when we entered, and which were to be given to two of the [292] oldest women present. The new robes were beautiful. They were embroidered with porcupine quills, fringed with deer-hoofs, and sprinkled with mica, which glittered in the firelight as we moved. It was certainly fine to have such a beautiful new robe; and right away, my husband gave his sister a horse because she had been so good to me. Later on, I made her some moccasins."

In addition to the special honor a woman might show her brother's wife by a ceremony such as described above, she would in general take pride in keeping her well-dressed. For instance Mary explained: "Mrs. Curly Head was the best-dressed woman I 607 knew. Her husband's sister kept her well-dressed. A woman 431 has a lot of pride in the appearance of her brother's wife, and the old women tell us that it was the same in the old days." Cora corroborated this by stating: "My sister and I would load my brother's wife with presents. 431 And if he had more than one wife, it would be the same,—a woman is good to her brother's wife no matter how many times he might be married." Coming Daylight mentioned that she made it a point to bring her cousin's wife—she had no blood brother—especially nice gifts whenever she made a trip and added that in former times, just as today, when a woman distributed berries she had picked, the first one she would think of would be either her brother's wife or her son's wife.

About all that a woman did for her husband's sister was to make her occasional gifts of moccasins. The giving of moccasins, however, had a significance far beyond what their extrinsic value suggests. Mary illustrated this by the following incident: "Flat Head is my cousin. He has three half-brothers, all of them having the same father but different mothers. I treat these three in the same way I treat Flat Head, namely, as a brother. One of these men died last spring, and his wife, who is of course my sister-in-law, came and brought me a pair of moccasins. So when she was leaving I gave her a woolen shawl which I had just bought, and a dress which I had made and intended to display in the bazaar. My husband's niece, who is young and doesn't understand the old ways, said reproachfully to me: 'Why, Aunt Mary, you gave up that nice shawl you wanted so badly.' So I told her: 'Surely—I couldn't let my sister-in-law go out of here without giving her something! You should know that when anyone gives you a pair of moccasins it is a big thing. It is as much as anything I can think of—as much as a bottle of whiskey or of brandy!'"

## GRANDPARENTS

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren was a 603 free-and-easy one, unmarked by the reticence which characterized the parent-child relationship, or by the feeling of restraint which obtains between so many relatives of opposite sex. "A grandfather can say anything he likes to his granddaughter, and vice

603 versa. Grandparents, for instance, can tell folk-tales and stories,
the subject-matter and details of which no parents would mention
in the hearing of their children." A woman would think nothing of
teasing her grandmother about men. The following is typical of
the milder sort of joking which is customary, but which would
be considered highly improper toward parents. "Coming Day-
light's granddaughter came into her house to borrow a knife. The
old woman told her: 'Don't lose that knife. I have had it for a
long time and I love that knife.' Whereupon the granddaughter
replied: 'Yes, you love that knife just like you love your sweet-
hearts!' and the several women present had a good laugh over
this joke." Again, Coming Daylight herself told of an old man
who was grandfather to her maternal uncle and thus also her
"grandfather." She said: "One day when I was still a young
woman, this old man asked me why I didn't come to him to obtain
[831] medicine power from him. I replied: 'Oh, I wouldn't come to you
because I know that you are one of those medicine men who in-
cludes sexual intercourse as payment, and if I came to you, you
would try to have me too!' Of course I could never have said that
to anyone in my parents' generation."

Grandparents are said to have been indulgent toward their
[868] grandchildren. They might occasionally give advice, and indeed
it was expected that a grandmother would train her granddaughter
not only in skills and techniques, but also prepare her for what to
expect on the physical side of marriage, warn her not to arouse
her husband's jealousy, etc. When in trouble, however, a grand-
child could discuss any matter with his grandparents. They would
give counsel, but never scold. A man would usually not count on
material aid from his grandparents, but, on the other hand, he was
not expected to contribute to their support to any greater degree
[431] than he would to that of any old persons were they in need—
namely, by giving an occasional present of food or clothing.

## SIBLINGS OF THE SAME SEX

593 The relationship between brothers on the one hand and between
sisters on the other was a more or less casual one. Family loyalty
and ordinary generosity were expected, but formality was lacking.
"A girl and her sisters could, of course, laugh and joke and tease

about sweethearts or any other topic they wish, always providing 593 that there is no other person present whom they must 'respect,' just as they can laugh and joke with women who are not related to them at all." Women who are on good terms tease and joke with each other a good deal. Coming Daylight and Singer for instance made remarks relating to sex whenever opportunity afforded. As an example, when one of them was telling of her marital experiences 831 she said: "I was willing enough to get married, but I didn't 593 like that particular old man to whom they gave me. I wrapped myself up in a separate blanket and wouldn't let him get near me." Whereupon the other old woman remarked: "I wish I had been there, I would have held you down!"—and this was considered a great joke. Again, while talking about modesty, or rather the lack of it among Crow women, Singer said: "That was in the old days and Gros Ventre women were very careful. These Gros Ventre girls at the present time—I don't think they even wear breech-cloths!" And Coming Daylight retorted: "If you were young now, you wouldn't wear one either!" In this vein then the two old grandmothers teased the present author as their granddaughter, saying to her: "We thought you had a husband. Why didn't you bring him with you to see us? Is it because you are afraid that we would take him away from you?"

Brothers can discuss any matters they choose, love affairs included, 593 but they usually do not josh and tease each other in public as do brothers-in-law, nor is the spirit of rivalry between them exhibited as it was with their enemy-friends.

Older brothers and sisters assumed a protective attitude toward younger siblings of like sex, and when in a position to do so would sometimes exhibit extreme generosity, although in this regard there was not the same sense of obligation which characterized the relationship with some other relatives. "It was considered unusual, for example, that Horse Capture, who had been urging his younger brother to be more sociable, gave away in his honor a horse and buggy on the occasion when the brother finally decided to join in the Grass Dance. But it was in line with the ordinary way of doing things that Horse Capture, who had been highly favored by his maternal uncle, privately gave to this young brother horses, as a start in life, when the maternal uncle failed to do

593 so." Brothers could borrow from each other without asking beforehand. Futhermore, an older man, who was married, might allow a younger unmarried brother to join the Crazy Lodge, lending his wife to stand in the place of a wife to him for ceremonial purposes.

### BROTHERS- AND SISTERS-IN-LAW

607 522 The greatest freedom was exhibited between a man and his brother's wife, on the one hand, and his wife's sister on the other. Likewise a woman could say anything she chose to her husband's brother and to her sister's husband. Teasing and horseplay between brother-in-law and sister-in-law were not only permitted but expected. A favorite joke was for one to conceal in a strategic place within the lodge an "air cushion" consisting of a buffalo cow bladder, blown up and tied. When the other came in he was shown to the appointed place and his weight on the cushion caused a most embarrassing noise, much to the hilarity of all present. Taking it in apparent good nature, the victim would, however, bide his time to get even.

Another accepted type of trick was for one to make a laughing stock of the other by heavily blackening the eyebrows of the victim, while he or she was asleep. A rougher kind of play was also indulged in. Singer, for instance, said: "I was once thrown in the creek by my brother-in-law. It took me a long time to find opportunity for retaliation, because he was wary and stayed away from the creek when I was around. On one occasion though, when he started for his bath, I followed him, and, when he was on the brink of the creek, I sneaked up behind him and shoved him in yelling as I ran away: 'It took me a long time to get even with you!'" On another occasion she and her brother-in-law were partners in a game he made up. "The Gros Ventres had won in battle and this man said he was going to give a 'Victory Dance.' My sister and I joined the group, and, as we arrived, this brother-in-law of ours was singing all kinds of songs,—silly songs with the words all mixed up. Then he said: 'Each man take a partner. We are going to stand up all night. The first one who sits has to pay a fine!' So he chose me as his partner. Finally, after some time, he said: 'Wait a minute, I have to get a drink.'

So he rushed into his father's lodge, but another of his sisters-in-law went in and saw him sitting down, and said to me: 'You two have lost, and we have won, because your partner sat down first.' Since I didn't have anything to put up as fine, my husband's brother pulled my eyebrows out, as was customary when a person couldn't pay a debt of this kind. My partner, however, gave a feast prepared by his mother as payment, but failed to include me. I got even with him by coming up behind him one day shortly thereafter and emptying a pail of water over his head." 607 522 [686]

Whether he liked it or not, a man had to take without complaint whatever kind of speech or action his own brother directed towards his wife, and likewise a woman had to put up with whatever her sister said or did to her husband. Men who were married to sisters considered each other as "brothers" rather than as brothers-in-law, just as women married to brothers were "sisters" and not sisters-in-law.

### INSEPARABLE-FRIENDS

As broadly as kinship bonds were conceived among the Gros Ventres in both consanguineal and affinal relationships, kinship behavior and obligations were extended even more widely through the institution of "inseparable-friends." Coming Daylight explained this as follows: "If two men are *inithlha* this means that they have grown up together and are the same as brothers although they are not really kin to each other. The children of these two men would be the same as brothers and sisters to each other and could not marry. All relatives of 'inseparable-friends' were considered as own relatives. Crow's Bull's 'inseparable-friend' was Truth. He knew all the songs that belonged to the Flat Pipe because Crow Bull was Keeper and the two were so much together. Truth always called Crow Bull's son 'son,' and he called me 'niece,' because Crow Bull was my mother's brother. A woman could tease the 'inseparable-friend' of her husband in just the same way she could tease her brother-in-law." 572 608

Cora illustrated how complicated relationships could become through the inseparable-friendship. "My brother and Arthur Skinner were such friends, which made Arthur my 'brother.' When Arthur married I should normally have taken his wife as 'sister-

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in-law.' The difficulty was that this woman Arthur married was already my 'aunt' because her father and my own were 'inseparable-friends.' Maybe in the old days Arthur couldn't have married her. But anyway we solved the situation by letting the older relationship take precedence over the newer one, so I called her 'aunt' rather than 'sister-in-law.'"

Some other pairs of "inseparable-friends," who were mentioned, were Cora's maternal grandfather and Consume It; Dressed In White and Ibe; Curley Head and Eagle Child. It was stated that while one friend was supposed to offer his life for the other in case of necessity, it did not always work out this way and at least one example was given to prove the point.

Regarding the same type of institutionalized friendship between women, the evidence is not clear. Singer stated: "When they use the word *itóhaka* it means that the two women concerned were friends from early childhood to the end of their lives. I had a friend like that. The father of that girl considered me as his own daughter and I had to respect her brother all my life. This girl was a cousin of Coming Daylight and we two were closer than sisters because we were the same age. We played together, worked together and did everything together. We used to eat at each other's homes, and we kept in touch after marriage by visiting back and forth." Coming Daylight suggested that these two were such close friends because their fathers may have been "inseparable-friends" and she denied that two women would participate in a relationship of the kind which would bind their families together independently of formalized friendship between men. No further information was obtained on this aspect of the subject.

# CHAPTER VII

## BIRTH AND INFANCY

### Conception and Contraception

It was a common belief among the Gros Ventres that for con- 842
ception to occur, sex relations must continue over a period of
time, conception could not occur as the result of one copulation.
The fact that a girl would be given in marriage before she reached
physiological maturity tended to confirm this belief, which is also
linked with another one, namely, that a girl would not menstruate [582]
unless and until she had experienced sex relations. This latter be- 841
lief is reflected in comments made by old women concerning the
young unmarried girls of the present day. Coming Daylight and 856
Singer remarked on several occasions: "Nowadays girls are 'terrible.' They menstruate and have well-developed figures before they are married." These signs of physical maturity the old women take as absolute evidence of loose conduct on the part of the girl, regardless of what the facts in the individual case may be.

The Gros Ventres apparently recognized some relationship be- 842
tween conception and lactation. Coming Daylight, for instance, said: "The Indian women claim that they didn't become pregnant so soon if they nursed their babies. They always used to carry their infants about with them because, if they went far away and left them, their milk might spoil. The old-timers used to say that if a woman took good care of her children and kept them close to her, her family would not increase so rapidly. It is the young ones nowadays who have the bottle-fed babies!"

There were certain precautions, too, that a woman should take to keep her offspring properly spaced. "If you sit in the place from which a pregnant woman has just risen, you will conceive immediately. Dispose of the afterbirth quickly. Destroy all clothing worn during pregnancy, even moccasins, or give them to some woman past child-bearing age. If a woman put these clothes on again she would soon become pregnant. Nowadays though mo-

842 thers wash such clothes and wear them again right after delivery—and they have a lot more babies now than they used to have, too."

[163] Coming Daylight said that formerly most women had only two or three children,—at most five,—and that some had none at all. Yet in the "old days" the population was large. Singer mentioned that although a man with several wives might have one as favorite, this would not make any difference. Each wife would have one or two children; no one of them would have a great many.[1]

These two old women, and our older men informants as well, were firmly convinced that "medicinal" contraceptives accounted for the small families. The old woman said: "Lots of women took medicine. There are roots for that [contraception]. Women who do not want children say, as an excuse, that one cannot keep things in order if there are children about. Not everybody had this kind of medicine, and one had to pay a high price for it—sometimes two or three horses. If a man were the owner of this type of medicine, he might demand in payment one of the other wives of the husband who obtained the medicine from him. If you take this kind of medicine you have to abide by certain rules. You must not let anyone who has children wear your robe; never sit on the bare ground; never hold an infant; don't sit on anyone's else bedding; above all, don't have intercourse with anyone other than your husband. If you break any of these rules you will conceive right away."

[837] To illustrate this point, one woman told about her cousin's wife who had taken medicine to prevent her having children. While her husband was away, she "threw in" with another man and became pregnant. Some women hesitated to take this kind of medicine because if a woman then became pregnant her husband would suspect infidelity, even though the wife had remained chaste but had "broken one of the other rules." Singer said that she would

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[145] [1] This is confirmed by Denig, who was among the northern plains tribes for 20 years and was himself married to an Assiniboine. He makes the following observations, p. 513: (1) Not more than two out of five children live till youth is passed; (2) two to five children is the average and seven or eight of rare occurrence; (3) a woman is old at 35 and seldom healthy, menopause occurs at 40 or earlier, the usual period of child-bearing is 18 to 35, although a few start bearing at 15.

have had good reason to have taken contraceptive medicine, since she had lost several children immediately after birth, but she was afraid to take it because her husband was "such a suspicious man." 842

A case was cited in which a man, who had this medicine, allowed only one of his nine wives to have a child, though he adopted at least one other child. It was believed that it was possible for a man to take contraceptive medicine, in which case it was not necessary for the wife to do so. Coming Daylight gave as an illustration the fact that her grandmother had no children by her first husband. Another example was given concerning a man who was known to have taken contraceptive medicine and none of whose wives had any children, although he adopted the son of one of them by a former marriage. Unfortunately he gave this adoptive son the medicine to drink and made the young man exceedingly unhappy, because he was very fond of children and none of his wives had any.

There were other medicines known which were said to prevent the birth of females and to permit males to be born. "If the wife of a man known to have this type of medicine gave birth to a daughter, the man would know it was not his child."

Contraceptive medicines might be offered to an individual direct by some supernatural being, but they could also be handed down in a family. Either a man or a woman could inherit this kind of medicine, use it personally, and treat others. It was said that many of these contraceptive medicines have been lost since for some time past it has been customary to bury the medicine with the individual owning it. The Boy was offered the knowledge of such medicine by a man, but he refused it.

Coming Daylight was offered this "power to know children" in a dream—that is, the power to avoid having children herself and to be able to administer the medicine to others. "The 'person' who wanted to give me the power told me, in my dream, to face the rising sun and he was just about to show me how to make a smudge from moss that grows on logs, when I told him: 'No: I would rather not have it.' Many a time 'they' tried to show me powers, but I would not be tricked into anything like that." As a matter of fact she loved children and wanted to have them. She ex- 842 787

842 [787] pressed this desire early in life and volunteered the following story of her experience.

"My first husband, Dressed in White, went out hunting and [587] brought back a lot of buffalo meat. I had my robe spread out just inside the door and he threw all the meat on it. Being hungry, I sat down there and was just about to eat the raw liver when he said: 'Wait! Don't eat that.' When I asked why not, he countered with the query: 'Do you like children?' To which I replied: 'You know I love children. I go wherever there is a baby—I love to have them on my lap.' So he said: 'Well, it is your fault that this is going to happen.' He took the oval piece of meat from the upper front quarter and roasted it in the coals. He then threw it to me in a careless way, instead of passing it to me as usual, and said: 'Here, you can have that for your son. You eat this plain—don't eat any tallow with it.' although they usually ate tallow with such lean meat. I said in disgust: 'E:ka:kya! I have always liked children,' and flung the meat out of the door. He said: 'Now that you have done this, you are going to have children from now on.' So, as he predicted, not long after that I became pregnant with my firstborn who was a boy. Unfortunately this boy died and I often wondered if it happened because I threw the meat too violently on that occasion when my husband had offered me the opportunity to choose whether or not I wished to bear children." Incidentally she remarked many times that she is happy she chose as she did,—otherwise now she would be all alone and her children have been so good to her.

The telling of the above incident brought to Coming Daylight's mind another, which confirms her belief in the relation between [585] "medicine" and conception. "Crow Bull, my mother's brother, had four wives. His first wife did not have any children. Then [582] he married an Assiniboine woman and still later took a third wife. Neither of the latter had children either until one time Crow Bull got mad. His third wife wanted to leave him for another man, but her relatives sent her back to Crow Bull. He, however, slept across from her bed and did not have intercourse with her. Shortly after this the Assiniboine woman did something to displease him and so he made up his mind: [789] 'These two wives of mine are going to have children and settle down!' He had an old-fash-

ioned doll which he wrapped up like a sack-baby and, one night 842
without letting her know what he was doing, he raised up the
covers on his third wife's bed and put this doll under her. He did 789
the same with the Assiniboine woman and said: 'She will have a boy, too.' As he had predicted, each bore him a son, and these two are the only children Crow Bull had. He later gave this doll to one of his niece's daughters, having 'sterilized' the doll first, however, so that the girl was not affected and subsequently gave birth to five children."

Natural sterility was apparently not recognized by the Gros 842
Ventres. If a couple was childless it was assumed that contraceptive medicines were used. While many individuals did not approve of the use of these medicines, each family had the right to
do as it pleased in this matter without outside interference.
Nevertheless, The Boy, alarmed at the falling birthrate which he 163
attributed to the widespread use of these old-fashioned medicines, on two occasions in 1921 and 1922 spoke out boldly in public about the matter. He feels he was justified in doing so since he thinks there has been an improvement in the situation.

Although the use of these medicines was rated by our informants as the major factor in accounting for the small number of
children per family, infant mortality was said to have been high, 847
and infanticide was known.

For premature infants nothing could be done in the days before 845
hospital care was known. Furthermore, where marked physical defects were obvious at birth, the chances that the infant would live were slight. It was stated, for instance, in regard to one woman who gave birth to a "little dog," that "had she been alone she would have done away with it, but her husband prevented her from doing so and everybody thought it was awful." Coming Daylight and Singer knew of two other actual instances of deformity,—one child who "looked like a beaver," and another who had "ears like a rabbit"—and both of these died shortly after birth. Coming Daylight remarked: "It seems as though we are so foolish the way we are ashamed of being deformed. One time when we were in town a white woman, whose face was quite disfigured, came into a restaurant where we were. My daughter told me: 'They [the whites] don't think anything of it. It can't be

845 helped.' But we Gros Ventres think so much of anything like that and if one of our own is deformed we almost want to die over it."[8]

847 597 Instances were known in which a normal infant, abandoned by its parents, was picked up and raised by someone else. Cora, for instance, had been told that when the third successive daughter was born to her maternal grandparents, the father was angry because he had badly wanted a son. He ordered that the infant be abandoned to die. She was saved, however, when the father's "inseparable-friend" found and adopted her. Again, Charles Buckman had heard that his great-grandfather one morning very early was attracted by the sound of an infant crying in the bush. He found the newborn baby and took it to his lodge, telling his wife to find a woman to nurse it. He raised this infant as his daughter.

847 845 The case of infanticide that stands out most clearly in the minds of Singer and Coming Daylight is that of twins born to the latter's sister. Coming Daylight was present at the birth and saw that her sister felt terrible about having borne twins. "My sister said: 'I won't nurse them anyway, so just take them away.' So they were both taken off in the bush; the boy was already dead and the girl froze to death. My sister was a terribly proud woman and was afraid people would think she was over-sexed. Besides she hadn't wanted any more children, since her two other sons were fairly well grown, and she maintained that a woman couldn't keep as neat with infants about. I had been waiting for my sister's husband to speak up, but he didn't say a word. I, however, told my sister: 'It is a bad thing to get rid of those babies, something will happen as a consequence.' As I had predicted, the next baby my sister had took her life. When trying to persuade her not to do away with the infants, I had used as one argument that white people have twins more often than Indians, but she persisted in maintaining that it was a disgrace." Mary remarked while Coming Daylight was telling this story of her sister: "My mother used to think it was so funny that white people are proud of twins!"

845 The attitude towards twins seems to have changed, as younger informants did not indicate that twins were considered a disgrace. For instance both The Boy and Thick insisted that twins were, on

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[8] Cf. Denig, p. 403.

the contrary, held to be holy and given special care.[8] They mentioned 845
nevertheless that women of child-bearing age refrained
from eating the two strips of flesh along the anterior of the backbone [262]
of buffalo lest twins result.

Coming Daylight said that she had heard of cases in the old days where twins would be separated,—one kept by the parents and the other adopted by someone else. Personally, however, she did not approve of this policy and when her daughter-in-law gave birth to twins she told her: "Be proud of them. Dress them alike and they will grow up well. Don't think more of one than of the other." She gave the same advice to her granddaughter when she in turn bore twins. The advice was not heeded in this instance and both the granddaughter and her husband adored one and neglected the other so that Coming Daylight herself took the neglected one. These twins were not quite a year old when the one loved by its parents died.

A middle-aged woman said that she had always heard regarding twins that they should be treated just alike and that the mother should always take both wherever she went and never leave one behind. Her own experience was a sad one. When her twins were about seven months old, one of them got sick and she had to take it to the hospital. The people at Hays told her: "You shouldn't leave one twin here." She, however, wanted to stay with the sick one, but the doctors sent her home. The twin left in the hospital died and people told her: "You shouldn't have left one there without the other."

### PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

The only indication from these two oldest women informants of 843
belief in prenatal impression was the remark of Coming Daylight
when telling the story of a young man who opened the belly of a 825
deer he had killed and found therein two young, each of which had
"human faces." She said: "So they concluded that even animals
get afraid and the young are marked." A younger woman mentioned
that she had heard that if a pregnant woman looks at some- 843

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[8] Kroeber, 1908, p. 182, gives the special names by which twins were called.

843 thing unusual it will affect her child and, further, that a woman in that condition should not look upon a corpse.

[845] Coming Daylight could not remember any cases of stillborn children, but finally Singer recalled that a woman, whom they both had known, had borne triplets which were dead at birth. Incidentally, this was the only case of triplets of which either had ever heard.

Certain prenatal care was taken to ensure easy delivery and healthy offspring. It was often mentioned that in the old days pregnant women were well taken care of. Coming Daylight explained it thus: " In those days a man usually had several wives so that the one who happened to be pregnant was looked after by the others and didn't have to work hard. She was not supposed to do any cooking, and, if it were absolutely necessary that she cook, she must wear something like a heavy apron to protect her lest the afterbirth stick. During hot weather she was supposed to wear a robe on her back, because they claimed that the heat was hard on the breasts. She was not allowed to pack heavy loads. They believed that she should work, but not enough to wear herself out. She was taught to take certain precautions. My grandmother, especially, would tell me, when I was pregnant, such things as: 'If you have to change sides while lying in bed, sit up first and then lie down on the other side. Don't just roll over, or the cord will wrap around the infant's head. If you leave your lodge, you mustn't stand in the door, you must go right through, so the baby will come quickly. Never back into a lodge because that will make the infant come the wrong way.' "

Coming Daylight claimed that she always got along well in childbirth because her infants were small and she followed the advice given her. Her firstborn was the most difficult, as is usual for most women, but her husband was a very fine, mature man who hadn't let her do anything to injure herself during pregnancy. Furthermore he followed the customary Gros Ventre abstention, being " very careful especially during the last month, when Gros Ventre men refrain absolutely from intercourse with their pregnant wives lest, when the infant is born, it be covered with a lot of 'white lard-like stuff.' "

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[211] The length of gestation was counted by moons. If, for in-

stance, it was the dark of the moon when a woman ceased menstruation, she kept track of the months by marking with charcoal on a piece of wood, or by notching a stick, each successive time the moon was in that phase and "she would usually estimate it right." 843 805 211

Childbirth usually took place right in the woman's own lodge. 844 Should someone there be sick, he would be moved to another lodge if possible, for while it was considered bad for the sick person to be in the same lodge with a woman in her menses, it was [841] much worse were the woman in labor, for the odor of the blood at delivery would affect the sick person adversely. In fact, a person who had only been near the place where a woman was being delivered was not allowed to come near a person who was ill. If the patient could not be moved, the woman in labor would go to another lodge, preferably to that of her grandmother or of her widowed aunt. She would avoid her own mother's lodge as her father or brothers might be around and she would be "ashamed" to go where they might be.

Although the attitude has somewhat changed now, in former times, according to Coming Daylight and Singer, a pregnant woman was supposed to be reticent regarding her condition right up to the last moment. She might suffer intensely, but "you would never know there was a thing wrong with her." Only when she seemed to be very close to term did they send for a midwife and for some old man or woman who would give her medicine. A 844 male doctor did not touch a woman in labor, but would give her medicine to alleviate the pains. Mary told of her own experience. 756 "There was a well-known doctor of this kind who died about ten years ago. He was blind and, when called on a case, would sit with a pot of medicine beside him. He attended me and when he heard me say I was in pain he would just touch me with the end of the stick and the cramps would go away. Finally I complained that I was tired. The midwife said that it would soon be over, but the old doctor told them: 'No. It hasn't turned yet.' I thought this was strange that he should know this as not only was he blind but he had not touched me. Later on he said: 'It will be about a half hour more.' And he was right."

Different practitioners have different methods. Singer witnessed the following case. "A man had received power from

844 756 'someone' [a supernatural agent] to relieve women in labor. His wife was assisting a woman who was experiencing great difficulty. She went to her husband and said: 'What are you made of that you don't pity and help us?' He paid no attention at first but finally gave in to her pleas. He said: 'All right. I will pity you folks. You blow this powdered medicine root on the nape of that woman's neck. Then boil a bit of this other medicine and give it to her with this horn spoon. Make her drink from this very spoon.' The treatment was successful and the child was born very shortly thereafter."

[842] 844 Sometimes such doctors would predict the sex of the expected child, but a common saying was that a woman herself could tell because "a boy will lie in the womb with his knees up, whereas a girl will lie flat."

It was not necessary to have both a midwife and a doctor if the midwife herself knew medicines. For instance, Coming Daylight's grandmother had medicines for childbirth and always looked after women without calling in anyone else. After Coming Daylight had borne her first child, her grandmother taught her all these medicines so that she in turn could assist her female relatives. They had to pay each one who helped at childbirth. The doctor, or the midwife who administered medicines, would receive as much as a horse, while the others who assisted were paid by gifts of lengths of cloth, blankets, or other articles of that sort.

The woman assumed a kneeling position and grasped a crossbar. "They won't let you lie down unless you are so weak you can't help yourself."[4] If a woman were slow in childbirth, the midwife tried to manipulate the foetus in the right place in order to speed the delivery. She massaged the woman gently and talked to her, telling her: "Take it easy. Don't think that you are going to have a hard time. Think of pleasant things. Make it easier for yourself."

Most women were very quiet even when the pains were bad. They always said that if a woman cries out she drives the child back. Furthermore, they said that it is bad if a woman turns and twists in pain as the cord will get all tangled up around the child.

Anyone assisting at the birth could cut the umbilical cord.

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[4] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 181.

"They usually cut the cord long, say four to six inches, because 844 they were afraid the infant would bleed to death if they cut it short. You kind of drain it and get it cleaned out and tie it once. Apply a powdered root and then put a band around the body. It usually takes four days before it drops off." Since the cord is part of the body and they wanted to keep it close to its owner, when the cord came off, they placed it in a small fancy bag filled with sweetgrass or tobacco and pinned the bag to the clothing right at the back of the neck. Singer said that she had heard that boys used to wear this little bag tied to the wrist rather than at the back of the neck as girls did. Good care was taken of the bag until 415 adulthood. The bag was usually in the shape of a turtle, with a 532 little head. Although Coming Daylight had made two such bags, she didn't know why they used this shape except that it had been done thus for generations.[8] Mary's grandmother, however, made a little container for Mary's own son and it was in the shape of a snake with a head. Mary added: "And the Gros Ventres don't 825 like snakes either. But my grandmother made that one in the shape of a snake on account of a dream she had."

The afterbirth was disposed of just as soon as possible, preferably by having someone place it good and high in the branches of a tree.[9] The person who disposed of the afterbirth was not supposed to let anyone see him do so, although the informants did not know the reason for the secrecy. It is more customary at present to burn the afterbirth as the whites do, but Coming Daylight remarked that she had done that only once,—on the occasion when she was caught out in the open all alone and had to deliver herself.

A mother rested quite a while after her child was born because 846 it was said that working would make her sweat and that would hurt her milk. The child of a woman who worked a great deal immediately after its birth would not grow up to be so healthy as the child of one who took it easy. In the opinion of Coming Daylight and of Singer a woman should sit up only after four days and get up and be walking around in about ten days. Coming Daylight her-

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[8] For discussion of these navel amulets and illustrations thereof, see Kroeber, 1908, pp. 166–67, and plate IX.

[9] "If it were left lying to be handled, the child would be afflicted with sores." Kroeber, 1908, p. 181.

846 self had to get up sooner and help with cooking because she was an only wife, except for the short time during her first marriage when her sister was co-wife. The midwife usually stayed and looked after the infant for a few days, at least until the cord came off.

Coming Daylight always put on a belt of rawhide about a foot wide immediately after delivery and laced it up tighter each day. She said the Gros Ventre women were strict about this practice as it " put the figure back into place."

If a woman were able to rest quietly after childbirth the flow should stop in about two weeks. If she worked, it was longer, perhaps a month. At any rate, after the flow stopped, a woman wrapped a blanket around herself and someone then held under the blanket a pan of live coals on which medicine had been sprinkled. Woman claimed they felt much better after this " fumigation." [757] There was also another medicine which Coming Daylight described as " good to clean you out after childbirth." This was made from a powdered root, a little pinch of which was put in a couple of quarts of water and turned the water about the color of tea. There was no bitter taste and the patient drank it like tea and instead of water.

[834] It was said that Gros Ventre men did not resume marital relations until at least a month after the baby was born,—often they deferred the resumption of relations even longer.

853 There was medicine given to make the mother's milk come. [278] It was made from the same root as that used in the Crazy Dance. The infant was not put to the breast immediately, as someone else drew out the " first milk " (colostrum) and spit it out. " After [825] that, the milk would be the right blue color. Should a woman be all alone when her child was born, she might have puppies draw out that ' first milk.' " Cora believes it is absolutely necessary to follow this rule. When her own daughter, for example, delivered her firstborn, an old woman offered to draw off this " first milk," but the daughter refused—so now she can give milk only from one breast and has to supplement her infant's feeding with milk from a bottle. No water or oil was given the infant before its first nursing. They started the baby to nurse after the colostrum had been drawn off " because there is something in the mother's milk that cleans the baby out."

If a mother could not feed her child well, they used to supplement the mother's milk by broth from meat. 853 Occasionally some woman could be found who would help out.[7] Coming Daylight, for instance, used to allow a son of her mother's brother to nurse, as his own mother was very thin and her milk was insufficient. Another time she nursed the infant son of her cousin whose wife, after he had deserted her, brought their baby to her husband and refused to take it back. Again, Mae's mother nursed several children not her own. When she was an old woman she would complain because she was not invited by these persons. She would fuss along these lines: "They never even invited me once. If it hadn't been for me, they would have starved when they were infants."

### EARLY DISCIPLINES

The child was usually ~~not~~ weaned until it was two years old or 862 more. Sometimes a child would be allowed to nurse until six or so, provided his mother did not become pregnant again. There was a boy who had started to school at six, and who would still run up to his mother to nurse when he had the opportunity. Many children would even run in from playing to get at the mother's breast. "It didn't seem to hurt them any!"

Definite effort was made to wean the child when the mother became pregnant. "If a woman didn't realize she was in this condition and allowed the child her breast, the child would have a bad stomach and diarrhea." One way of weaning the child was to put nicotine from a pipe on the nipples. The sight of this so frightened the child that he would not try to nurse. If it was dark and he didn't see it and happened to taste it, he would raise an awful cry, but he would be cured. Pepper was also used in the same way. They would give the child as a "pacifier" a piece of meat, pounded soft, sweetened and tied in a soft white rag. The child would suck on this until he fell asleep.

It was when the new baby was born that they would have the 593 most trouble with the child who had just been weaned. Many children were jealous of a new arrival. Coming Daylight said that they had to watch carefully lest an attempt be made to harm the

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[7] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 181.

593 infant. Some siblings, for example, would try to plug the infant's mouth with a rag or some other object. An occasional child would be unusually jealous and resent all younger siblings. One of Coming Daylight's own boys was like that. He would try persistently to get ahead of his little brother. The mother would be lying down with the infant at her side, and this little boy would try to snuggle in between her and the infant. He stuck close to her and wanted to accompany her everywhere, even when she left the lodge at night to attend to her necessities,— and this was after he was old enough to know he should not follow her at such a time. One of Cora's children was like that at the time the information was being gathered, jealous of the other children in the family and following her everywhere.

853 One of the first solid foods a baby was fed was a ball of cooked rose-berries mixed with grease. This was put on the end of a stick in lollypop fashion. Marrow, guts and rose-berry soup were considered the best food for growing, healthy children.

854 A newborn infant is called a "sack-baby." The sack was made of fine buckskin, or of buffalo calfskin with the fur left on one side, and was laced up the front. It was made just the same way for a girl as for a boy. A piece of rawhide was put inside the sack to stiffen it, and some rags were placed between it and the child's body to stuff it up and prevent chafing. The board was rectangular, rounded at the top, and reached only to the baby's neck. They made a little round cap out of calfskin, with little fur earmuffs that tied under the chin. They used to decorate their baby sacks nicely and sewed little deerhoofs thereon,—"They liked to have something rattle on their clothing."

When placing the infant in the sack they were very careful that its feet and legs should be properly placed. Singer remarked that in the old days everybody's legs were nice and straight and that it is only these "diaper babies" around here now who are bow-legged.

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237 Small children, including infants, were washed each morning, —in winter rubbed with snow,—and then powdered. As a powder, buffalo chips were pounded on rawhide and then, "to sort of sterilize," hot stones were placed thereon. When the powdered chips were warmed, but not too hot, the stones were removed and the

baby was laid in the powder and rubbed under its arms, between its legs, under the toes, between the fingers,—wherever the baby might chafe. "The baby feels fine then and goes right to sleep." When no buffalo chips were available horse manure treated the same way was an adequate substitute. Fresh powder was put in the sack each day, and in the winter it was first heated. 854 278 234

Sometimes accidents happened. One time when a man named Fork (of a tree) was a baby, his grandmother was tending to him. She had heated the powdered chips in the sack with a hot stone and forgot to remove it. The baby cried and cried. Finally they unbound him and found that his toe was right against the hot rock. This injured his toe and he always walked with a peculiar gait. Cora has a scar on her buttocks which she thinks came from a similar accident.

If the father's sister failed to provide a sack and none was forthcoming from any other relative, the mother would wrap the infant in a skin and tie it with straps. Coming Daylight said that before her time they used a cradleboard. If they had a travois they would carry the baby on that. "Some, if they didn't have a cradleboard, used a piece of stiffened leather hooked over the saddle horn." 854

When the infant was old enough to move its arms, the arms were left free of wrappings. The infant was kept in the sack day and night. When not being carried about, it was hung either from one of the lodge poles inside the lodge, or swinging from the travois placed upright against the lodge. Lullabies were sometimes sung.[*] At night, the infant was right beside its mother, and the father usually slept in separate bedding so as not to crowd the child. When the powder in the sack was changed, they let the baby play around and stretch "because babies must have gotten tired staying in those sacks." 533

Toilet training was started when the infant was between six and twelve months old. "The baby is more alert and easier to handle then. You just guessed at the time and opened the sack and held the baby out, supporting it under the knees and thighs. The child would usually respond. If there were a delay, then you talked to him and made a hissing noise to encourage him. You 863

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[*] Unfortunately no lullabies were recorded.

863 might even 'fuss' a little with him, saying something like: 'Look at you! I thought I told you to urinate. I'm trying to make you do it at the right time, and you want to hold back!' But we were not harsh with infants because we knew they have to learn. Anyway, if you misjudged the time, all you had to do was to throw out the powdered chips and put in fresh ones. The old way was much better. These diaper-babies around here now are much more trouble."

[755] If a child developed enuresis, a tiny bit of the tail of a fox or of a beaver tied to his belt, or a piece of badger skin for him to sit on, was thought to guarantee a cure.

854 [825 757] To help the child who had trouble teething, it was considered wise to kill a mouse, skin it, take the back thigh and, after cooking it well, rub on the gums. It is said by Coming Daylight that the Crow used fish for this purpose. Some children have such a difficult time that their gums are very sore and their tongues even swell. Coming Daylight's grandmother and others knew how to [757] remedy that condition. The doctor, using a sharp-pointed bone, would lance the gums here and there where the teeth were coming, after allowing the gums to bleed, they would rub some powdered [751] root on the gums. As a preventive, old folks said to catch tiny baby mice and, after roasting them on the coals, feed them to the child. Coming Daylight, for instance, did that for her children, and none of them had any trouble with teething.

856 They would let babies crawl when they showed the inclination to do so, but the old women were sure that they always watched their babies more closely than mothers do today. They used to encourage them to walk by holding them up and helping them. It has been Coming Daylight's experience that boys learn to walk more quickly than girls. It may be, however, that more attention was given to boys.

198 856 The only expression the old women, or the younger ones for that matter, could think of that could be considered "baby talk" was that babies, when very small and just beginning to talk, say: "I" (prolonged and with strong glottal stop) if they do not like something or do not wish to take what is offered. This, together with *na'a* 'mother' and *ni'a* 'father,'[9]—which babies say properly

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[9] These are vocative forms rather than descriptive forms.

right off,—are about the first words a baby says. When a child is [198] backward in learning to talk, the remedy is to feed him meadow- 856 lark eggs, hard-boiled. Cora says this treatment was very effective for one of her sons, and Coming Daylight fed them to one of her daughters. They all agreed, however, that the treatment may sometimes be too effective. If anyone is very talkative even today the favorite saying is: "His mother must have fed him meadowlark eggs."

The care of her baby was the first duty of a mother. Of course, 854 if she were a co-wife, the other wives might help her, and in any case the grandmother might take a hand. But Coming Daylight often had no one upon whom she could depend, so she had to be extremely careful. For example, when she was married to Little Man and had an infant in the toddling stage, she would drape a blanket loosely about her hips and while she sat and did beadwork, the infant could play safely at her left hip inside the blanket. The old-timers, moreover, never left a baby alone. 854 When her first child was born Coming Daylight was told by her grandmother 751 never to leave a baby alone; that if it were absolutely necessary she should leave him even for a minute, she should take a small stick, blacken the tip with nicotine, and leave it in the swing or alongside where the infant lay. This was done to keep the "spirits" away. Even Mary feels strongly about leaving a child alone. She tells her daughter about it, but the daughter is very modern. The result is that frequently Mary stays home from a dance rather than leave a grandchild by itself.

If the mother of a young infant was going on a trip, for in- [774] stance, to pick berries, she invited the baby's *bttd"tao* 'shadow, spirit, soul' saying: "Come on with us or we might leave you. We are going now." If one failed to do this, it would be like leaving part of the baby behind and the baby would be cross all evening.

Sometimes other children in the family would be called upon to 854 look after the infant. They were apt to get tired quickly however 857 and tell their mother: "Hurry up and take your baby or I will 593 drop it." Girls were depended upon more than boys to look after younger siblings, and girls more or less were expected to do so "right from the beginning." The old women felt that formerly

854 857 men were much more interested in children than they seem to be at present.

855 515 857 Just as soon as a child was old enough to look after himself—say from about the age of three or four years—he would be compelled to bathe every morning before eating. An older boy would supervise his younger brothers and see to it that they complied with the regulation—even in winter when it was sometimes necessary to cut a hole in the ice. Al says: "This is what makes one tough." Charles gave as illustration an incident which occurred one morning when there was ice on the edge of the river and snow was floating on the surface. "An older brother said to his three younger brothers: 'Go and take a plunge.' The wind was blowing and the three boys sat on the bank, each one encouraging the other to be the first one in. The older brother came behind them yelling: 'I didn't say to you boys to stay on the edge—I said to take a plunge!' Whereupon he threw each of them in the icy water telling them to wash their faces, hair and hands. He then sent them home to water the horses while he took his plunge." In case the lodge might be too far from a stream in winter, the boys and men rolled in the snow and rubbed their bodies with it. Everyone, young and old alike, bathed every day.

515 751 That the daily dip was looked upon as a health measure is shown by the statement of Cora who remarked that when she was small she used to bathe daily in the creek and she has never been sick up to the present. Coming Daylight, too, said that she had kept up the practice until a few years ago and complains that she has been sickly ever since giving it up.

271 751 It was considered important for health's sake to drink a lot of water too. The relatives who raised Coming Daylight used to tell her to wash her mouth out with water immediately upon arising. Further she was instructed to drink water right after eating, even though she might not feel thirsty, and to walk about after finishing a meal. She claims she followed these rules all her life and that for this reason she is not troubled, as so many of the aged are, with difficulty in controlling urination, and so on.

302 After the morning bath, all would have their faces painted all over with red paint "in order to keep their faces clean and light-skinned." Coming Daylight complained that since this practice

has been given up, the Gros Ventres are so sunburned that their 302
skin looks almost "black." Singer showed a small bag of red
paint which she still had. She kept a piece of beaver castor in the [237]
bag so the paint would be sweet-smelling.

In the old days the Gros Ventres were early risers. Everyone 512
got up while it was still dark, perhaps about three o'clock in summer and before seven in winter. It didn't make any difference whether a child might otherwise be favored, the rule was ironclad that all must rise early and that no one should lie abed. This applied to all—old people as well as to children.

One method of making sure that children would be strong was 856
to take a beaver tail and slap the child on the hand and on the back
while saying: "You will be good and strong." Mary, for instance, 825
has seen her mother do this to all her grandchildren, hitting them so hard they almost cried. The beaver is considered a very strong animal since he cuts down big trees and drags them about.

### NAMING AND EAR-PIERCING

Every individaul received a name shortly after birth. Many 551
Gros Ventres, however, were, and are, known by names other than the original one. Names were changed for particular reasons, and in addition nicknames were frequently employed. Sometimes the first name was bestowed with considerable formality, but naming could be carried out in a variety of ways,[10] as the following examples show. 553

"Shortly after Coming Daylight was born, her father sent for 852
his sister's husband and told him: 'Now I invited you to name your niece. I am giving you such-and-such kind of horse' (a bay, or a pinto, or whatnot). There was a big feast on this occasion and the lodge was full of people. The namer sat in the place of honor at the back of the lodge. He held the infant in his arms, told a war deed and said: 'Now I name her 'Taken A Prisoner.' Then he said a long prayer, starting with the usual formula, and wishing the infant a long life. He then handed the infant to the person to his left saying: 'Take Taken A Prisoner'; and so the infant was passed all around the lodge, each repeating the same to

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[10] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 182.

553 852 his neighbor. The reason that her father did all this was because she was the first-born and so she was kind of expensive to her family. If a man thought he could afford it, he would make a big feast for his first-born, and then give less at the naming of his other children, although it was not always the case that the first-born got the best. It apparently depended on what the man could afford at the time."

"When Coming Daylight's sister was born, her father's sister told her husband that she wanted him to name this niece. So she came to her brother's lodge and said: 'Well, I have come for my niece, I am going to have her named by the same person who named her older sister.' This woman, then, invited a lot of people to her place and put up the feast. She gave her husband a small keg of whiskey, when he named the infant Kills One. She laid the present down in front of him and said: 'This is what I give you for naming this child—and you seem very pleased with it, too!'"

Coming Daylight's eldest daughter, however, was named "Plumes in the Hair" by her own father. This was just a private naming, that is, no invited guests or big feast. Iron Bucket, husband of Singer, named their first daughter, too. He gave her the name of "Kills Last."

Coming Daylight was offered the choice of two names for one of her little boys, by his father who dreamed of them while he was out on the hills torturing himself by the Sacrifice Dance technique.

Another of Coming Daylight's children was named by an old blind doctor. "Her sister-in-law, wife of her brother-cousin, brought in this doctor. She told him: 'I brought you here to give my sister-in-law something to drink [to hasten delivery].' The old man said: 'This child that is to be born will be a girl and I am going to name her "Earth Woman." She will grow up and live to be an old woman." Cora, too, mentioned that her sister-in-law (a relative of her husband's) came to her and said: "If I can, I will come and attend you when your child is born, and I will name it too." She was not able to attend the birth, but she did come later and fetch the infant. Standing in the center of the dancing space she named him "Runs on Top," after one of her relatives, and gave away lots of things in his honor.

Names may be bestowed on account of dreams. Coming Daylight named one of her grandchildren that way. "She dreamed that there was a big gathering and that she was looking for this little grandson. In reality of course he was an infant, but in the dream he was three or four years old. There was an old man, a very old man, dressed all in white, who said to her: 'Why, there goes "White Skunk" up that way.' As she looked she saw her grandson running in the distance and he seemed to be now a tall young man. Upon waking, she told her dream to her daughter. The daughter in turn told her husband: 'My mother had a dream and "White Skunk" is what the old man called him.' The husband said: 'Fine. We will call him that. Now he will reach old age.'" 553 787

If the name is from a dream, the person tells the dream at the time of the naming. This is the way Singer was named by Old Man Sitting High. Occasionally a person might volunteer to name a child on account of a dream, although not always because he had dreamed of a name. "Before one of Cora's children was born, Stiff Arm came to her and told her he had had a bad dream about her. He said: 'In order to prevent my bad dream coming true, I will name the child.' Cora was scared because he was a medicine man. So she had to have a big feast and invite lots of people and give Stiff Arm a horse. There was the formal ceremony. Stiff Arm had given Cora and her husband the choice of three names, derived from his medicine powers: 'White Eagle,' 'Rides Down Hill,' and 'Sailing Eagle.' They chose the last, but the boy was sickly and they had a hard time rearing him. Her relatives thought she should change his name, but she never bothered to do so. He is a young man now."

It was customary that "when a child gets sick through the given name," the name be changed. The Skinners, for instance, hired Stiff Arm to name their boy. He called him "White Eagle" but he was sickly, so his grandmother, Ghost Calf, and Coming Daylight were the ones that changed his name to that of his grandfather, "Big Man." Ghost Calf told the boy's father to give away two dollars at the dance when she announced the new name. It was stated that in any case the namer should be a healthy person. 553 [431]

Old folks sometimes gave away their own names to children, as in the case of a man nicknamed Iron Bucket, whose grand-

553 father had given him his own name, "Bear Teeth"; and in that of Ragged Robe's wife who gave her name to a little girl. In this latter case, at least, the woman continued using her own name.

Except in those cases where the name of a relative is given, as is seemingly the rule nowadays, the name must have some specific relation to either the war deeds or the medicine powers of the namer. Singer remarked that one time, when she had been very lucky in locating some weapons abandoned by the enemy, she was looking forward very much to naming a little relative "Finder" in connection with this exploit. Unfortunately, however, the child's father had already had a name for her so Singer was disappointed. A Pipe-Keeper, too, might name a child from something connected with the Pipe. Rufus Warrior, for instance, was named from the rawhide with which the Flat Pipe is wrapped; another child was called "Red Woman" from the fact that the wife of the Flat Pipe Keeper was always painted red,—even her hair. Al Chandler knows of two people his grandfather had named from objects in the Feather Pipe bundle.

The more formal the occasion, the more expensive the naming was for the family involved. If, for instance, advantage was taken of a public ceremony, not only was the one who gave the
[431] name recompensed by a valuable gift, such as a horse, but many other gifts would be given to various persons in the audience in
[727] order to honor the recipient of the name and to give prestige to his
554] family. The expense was particularly heavy when a name was publicly bestowed upon an adult in recognition of bravery at war.[11]

551 Nearly everyone had a nickname. One of the most common was, and is, simply "Girl" or "Boy." Such a nickname often was acquired in early childhood because the name which had been bestowed was not liked,—and those names given through medicine often fell in that category. Coming Daylight said that she had not cared for the name given by a medicine man to her first-born son, so she had called him "Boy." The child died very young, and she now wonders if he would have lived longer had they used his real name. Nicknames may be acquired at any time of life and sometimes they are far from complimentary, especially those bestowed later in life by enemy-friends. If the nickname "takes" there is

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[11] Cf. Chapter 5, p. 101.

nothing the person can do about it. One of Singer's friends was 551
called "Matter in the Ear" and another "Ugly or Homely." Another woman harped so much on an event which took place at Turtle River, that "Turtle River" became the name by which she was known, and most people forgot that her actual name was "Spotted Calf."

The piercing of the ears may be done at the same time as the 304
naming, as apparently was done in the case of Coming Daylight, or might be done shortly thereafter. Singer, for instance, was [852]
named by Sitting High, but her grandmother on a different occasion pierced her ears. The parents might pay someone to do this, or a relative might volunteer. The sooner the ear-piercing is done the better, because the older the child is the more it may hurt. Singer said: "That ear-piercing goes either through a dream or [787]
through war deeds." In the former case, the dream is told and then the ears are pierced. In the latter case the person must relate a war story: "This is what I have done. . . ." The story has to be a true one concerning an incident wherein the enemy did not retaliate so the ears will heal up without any trouble.[11] The actual procedure, regardless of whether there is much formality or not, is as follows. An awl is used to pierce the ear and into the hole is inserted either a small splinter of rose-wood sharpened to a pin-point, or a porcupine quill. Whichever is used, it is greased before inserting and is left in until it falls out when the ear is healed. At this time is then inserted a small ring merely to keep the hole open. Fancy earrings are not worn by small children. [301]
Formerly boys' ears were pierced as well as girls'. The number of holes in each ear seems more or less arbitrary, but all are made on the same occasion. Coming Daylight has one in each ear; Singer has two; Coming Daylight's eldest son has three. The custom is now dying out as the present generation of mothers does not believe in it. Coming Daylight wanted to pierce the ears of her great-granddaughter but the child's mother said: "No. You will hurt her."

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[11] Kroeber, 1908, p. 182 states that ear-piercing was said to be unaccompanied by special ceremonial actions.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CHILDHOOD

858 In the days before the buffalo disappeared and before formal schooling was available, childhood, it was said, for girls was shorter [582] and for boys was longer than at present. A girl was ordinarily given in marriage before she was twelve years old—certainly before she attained physiological maturity. A boy on the other hand, though seemingly anxious to participate in hunting and in war as soon as he was able, was not forced to bear the full responsibilities of adulthood until the end of adolescence. While there was considerable variation from family to family in the amount of time required of children in training for practical tasks, all enjoyed a considerable amount of " free time."

### PLAY

857 526 Singer and Coming Daylight, the two oldest of our informants, in recalling the amusements and pastimes of their youth, decided that sliding down hills was one of the most pleasurable as it could be done at any time of the year. [493] In winter, when there was snow, the boys used a kind of sled made by lashing buffalo rib-bones together. Girls managed just as well by simply sitting on their robes and holding between their legs the end which usually hung free. In summer a stiff buffalo hide was used for sliding down the grassy slopes.[1] [524] When the water was frozen, boys and girls alike skated with their feet on the ice, thus clearing a slick surface on which to spin their tops made of horn.

857 526 481 Swimming, however, was the great sport in summer. Girls left their dresses close to the bank, those of the older girls in a neat row closest to the edge and those of the smaller girls in the next row. Beginners used the dog-paddle, but the boys developed profi-

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[1] For this and some other types of amusement, see Kroeber, 1908, pp. 190–91.

ciency with the overhand stroke and girls with the breast stroke.[8] 857
Sometimes the children amused themselves by rolling down the 526
bank so that their bodies made a loud smack as they hit the water. 481
At other times they held contests to see who could dive and stay under the longest time, or who could make the biggest bubble by exhaling under water. Follow-the-leader was played even in big rivers like the Missouri, but only the more courageous participated in this game. The one who had the reputation as bravest was the leader, and Coming Daylight claimed that she, herself, often led off, one of her accomplishments being the ability to swim quite far under water.

There was no adult supervision of children at play and they 857
spent much time at the water's edge, even when not intending to 524
swim. Modelling in clay was done by boys as well as by girls. The latter liked especially to form wet clay into "parfleches" and incise marks to represent beaded and painted designs.

Walking on stilts, teetering on logs, swinging by standing in a [481]
loop of rawhide, all were considered enjoyable activities for little girls. Nevertheless some of their games were quite rough-and-tumble. In one such game, girls formed a circle, each pinching the flesh on the back of her neighbor's left hand; while standing thus they sang a song which was repeated as many times as necessary until someone let go of her neighbor's hand; whereupon this girl was jumped on and mauled by all the others. In another game, one girl, with her eyes closed, would try to find the others who were seated in a row on the ground. Different ones would call out: "This way! This way!" Each was anxious to be the first discovered. As soon as the girl who was "it" touched one of the others, she picked her up and, carrying her upside-down on her back to the spot from which she had originally started, she dumped her burden on the ground. This procedure was repeated until "it" had carried each girl, but the last one to be dumped was tickled unmercifully by all the others.

Girls played with two kinds of balls. One type was of buck- 857
skin stuffed with deer-hair. This they would toss to one another. 526
The other type of ball was large and made from the bladder of a [237]
buffalo cow, dried and stuffed.

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[8] The marked ability of the Gros Ventres in swimming was noted in 1833 [149]
by Maximilian, p. 72.

857 buffalo cow, dried and stuffed. This type they would bounce and
kick. A popular game played among girls in spring was as
526 follows. The girls holding hands formed a big ring. One girl in the
center would have a ball. She would throw it at anyone in the
ring. When she hit her chosen victim on the chest with the ball,
the girls let go of each other's hands and each ran for a piece of
buffalo chip where she would be "safe."[8]

A game played by boys and girls together in the evening was as follows. The children would line up according to size behind the tallest boy who would have in his hand a stick which was smouldering at the end. Each child held on tightly to the one in front of him. The boy holding the stick would try to touch the smallest child at the end of the line. The line would writhe as big sparks would fly and sometimes hair got singed. One old woman, recalling this game, remarked: "I don't know when we would get to bed, we had such a good time!"

Sometimes the children would send one of the group on an
857 errand. Those who stayed behind would wet their hands with their
524 tongues and say: "We will watch this to see if it takes you a long
time or not." If their hands were still wet when the member of
the group returned, they decided that he had done the errand very
quickly.

When there were pretty clouds in the sky a little girl might
point one out to the other children and tell them to watch it. Then
she would stand at the bank of the river, bending over at the
waist and violently flinging her arms from side to side while
[821 singing. The others would watch the cloud and tell her that it was
789 disappearing and soon it would be gone. "They used to think they
could make the cloud disappear by singing that song."

If a group of girls were playing together and some one boy, say
[576 from seven to nine years old, would butt in, the girls would all sit
down to show that they resented the intrusion. If the boy did not
leave, the girls would then form a circle around him and sing
a derisive song. Thus the boy would be shamed and run off.
The opportunity for this did not occur very often, since boys
from about the age of seven usually went off to be by themselves

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[8] For description of ball games and illustration of type of football, see Kroeber, 1908, fig. 23.

at play. It was said that a girl, of course, would never think of attempting to break into a group of boys. 857 524

Sometimes a group of boys tried to break up the girls' play. One way they pestered them was to wait until they were about to slide down a hill. Just as a girl would be ready to start, one of the boys would grab one of her legs and spin her around so that she would go down the hill backwards.

A favorite sport among boys involved skill in shooting arrows.[4] One game was to plant a marked arrow as a target. Then two boys would shoot two arrows each, and the one whose arrow came closest to the marker would take the arrows of his opponent. Sometimes they would see who could shoot the greatest distance. An interesting variation was to fasten a bow to upright sticks, one stick shorter than the other, so that the bow slanted with the string up. The player would stand on one side of the bow and tap the arrow against the bowstring to get the string vibrating, and when he judged the vibration sufficient to send the arrow toward the marker about 35-40 feet distant, he would release the arrow. Then another player would try his luck. The one who came closer to the marker would take the arrow of the one who lost. 857 526

Boys played a variant of the hoop and pole game. The hoop was larger than that used in the game as played by adults and a split stick was used as lance. The thrower aimed at the center of the wheel and, if he hit it, the shot was called " the crow." Another wheel game played by boys was rolling hoops made of green willow wrapped with willow bark. There were no crosspieces in this wheel which was about 16 inches in diameter. Two teams lined up and the hoop was rolled as swiftly as possible by a member of one team while the members of the opposing team by shooting arrows tried to hit the rim of the hoop. If one succeeded and thus stopped the wheel, he retrieved his arrow, placed the hoop against a rock and had a chance to hit the rim while the hoop was at rest.

Occasionally there was trouble between boys who were contesting. Thick told of one occasion when he and his partner were betting against two other boys. Thick himself happened to make the winning point by splitting the upright arrow at which they 857 526 578

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[4] Some boys' games are described by Kroeber, 1908, pp. 186–87.

857 were shooting. "Just as I leaned down to pick up the arrows
526 which had been bet and fairly won, one of the other boys got mad
and shot at me. The arrow hit my hand and I bear the scar to
578 this day. On another occasion at the same kind of game, my partner and I won, and one of the boys of the opposing couple hit both of us over the head with his bow. My people always discouraged me from fighting—I was a shy boy in any case—but my partner took the bow away from one of our opponents and in turn hit him over the head. The opponent ran home and reported to his parents. His mother was the kind who took up for her sons and so she came toward my partner and me. My partner was still angry and called out to the woman: 'We are going to shoot you with our arrows if you come any closer!' Whereupon the woman turned
[861] around and went back without saying anything. When our parents heard of this, however, both my partner and I were given a good tongue-lashing for having threatened a woman."

857 In summer, boys of the same band playing together as a group
expected a fight if they came in contact with a group from another
578 band. While sometimes they used bows and arrows in this type of fighting, more often they used mud balls propelled from the end of a willow stick about three feet long. Thick gave the following account of one of these battles in which he participated as a boy.

"One summer day I was with my band group, the Frozens. We expected we might be raided, so we had already prepared mud balls and were modeling clay figures—horses, buffalo, men, and so on—when the Upper Quarters gang attacked. We Frozens grabbed our sticks and mud balls and ran into a coulee and then turned on the Upper Quarters. As the latter approached they protected themselves by holding their robes up in front of their faces, since the mud balls were aimed at their heads. Jim Shortman happened to be the member of the Upper Quarters who was 'bravest' and in the lead. I aimed at him and Jim put up his robe and warded off the shot; but Dwarf, who was right beside me, threw a mud ball immediately after I had and hit Jim right in the eye, breaking the skin and knocking him down. When they saw the blood, Jim ran home and the others, especially Dwarf, were scared. When Dwarf saw Jim's father coming toward them, he was afraid to go to his own home, so he ran to a neighbor's. Jim's father found him there half-crying. He took Dwarf by the wrist and said: 'Come my friend.' He led him to his home and Dwarf thought he was going to be killed. On the contrary, however, Jim's father led him into his lodge and said: 'My friend, I am glad you made my boy cry. I have never laid a hand on him nor did I ever make him cry, and I'm glad you have done this.' He then gave Dwarf a big pile of meat and told him to eat as much as he liked and to take the rest home. As Dwarf was leaving Jim's father took a valuable Hudson's Bay blanket and cut it in two and gave him half saying: 'Here is this, use it for your blanket.' Then he took another half-blanket and said: 'Have your mother make leggins for you. Friend, I am glad you made my boy cry. I thank you for it. Now you can go home.' It just so happened, fortunately for Dwarf, that Jim Shortman was a beloved-child."[8] 857 578

Occasionally girls, or sometimes boys and girls together, formed a group in the evening to sing in front of the lodge of a rich family who they knew had such a specially loved child. The group danced and sang and then the woman of the lodge would invite them in. She would feed them and say that she was doing so in the name of that beloved-child. 857 533 [593]

Coming Daylight described how she joined groups who were going around the camp circle singing in front of the lodges of those who had returned successfully from a war party. This was before she was married and so she had to get permission from her grandmother. Mounted on a horse with a girl friend her own age, whose brother was supposed to keep an eye on them, they rode with the others. Singer admitted she had not participated in such singing parties when she was a child because she never had a horse to ride upon.

Much of the leisure time of children was seemingly spent in play which reflected the daily routine of adult life as well as many aspects of the life cycle. A group went quite far outside the camp circle, for instance, to play they were "married folk." If little boys went along with the girls, some would be "husbands," some "sons" and "sons-in-law." The "women" would tell their 857 524

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[8] For details on the concept of the beloved-child, see Flannery, 1941.

857 524 "husbands": "Go out and hunt buffalo." The boys would go off and stay a little while and on their way back made noises like neighing horses. This would be a sign for the girls to come to meet them and make comments such as: "Oh, what a lot of meat you are bringing!" Then they would pretend to slice, cook, and eat this imaginary meat. Once in a while the children actually [224] snared a gopher, the skin of which served very well in their play as a food sack.

In order to lend excitement to this kind of play, they might divide into two groups and one "tribe" would attack the other. When their "husbands" or loved ones were "killed," the girls mourned, crying just as they had observed grown-ups do, even going so far as to make marks on their legs with mud to represent cuts. A "corpse" would be prepared for "burial," as they had seen the dead wrapped, with the exception that in play they failed to wrap the head.

Sometimes girls would take the foreleg of a buffalo, for example, and wrap it up to serve as a "baby." After having gotten from the river a certain kind of reed to serve as their hair, when the baby "died" they cut off their "hair" as a sign of mourning.

Many women described the lodges they, as children, built which [492] were large enough to play in. Garter Snake used a big yellow dog that belonged to her grandmother as a horse, and when her lodge moved she packed everything on a travois which the dog drew. When it was not convenient to have the lodges built large enough to actually accommodate the children inside, the formation of the camp circle was copied by making large leaves into the shape of tipis. Sticks then represented horses and other sticks attached thereto were travois. These little wooden horses might be fitted out like real ones, with miniature beaded horse blankets, and so on. Occasionally, too, a little boy might pretend he was a horse and drag the travois while being led by a girl as he held a line in his mouth. When this type of horse was out grazing, the owner would have a difficult time catching it.

Sometimes the girls pretended that they cut off their little fingers as a sacrifice, even holding sage to the "wound" as in real life. Coming Daylight and Garter Snake, both of whom as children were associated with one of the Sacred Pipes, mentioned that

many girls liked to pretend that they had one of these Pipes at 857
their play-lodge. They used a certain kind of flower to represent 524
the Pipe and would put it outside the play-lodge in the same position
as the real Pipe was placed. They smudged and sang Pipe
songs just as their elders did. Once in a while they would pretend
they were going to transfer the Pipe. Mud was smeared on
their foreheads just as the Keeper used paint. The others would
seize the new "Keeper," paint him, go through an imitation of the
ceremonies, sing songs, and so on. At the end of the game, however,
the rest of the children finally took the "Keeper" and
dumped him in the water head foremost,—an indignity that would
have been out of the question in regard to a real Keeper.

Thus it was evident how much children learned by observation. 857
It was specifically stated in regard to the learning of songs that 868
no one ever sat down with a child to teach him a special song or
dance, that he would pick up songs and dances by hearing and
seeing them performed at the various ceremonies. Similarly, according
to both Coming Daylight and to Singer, there was no special
teaching in regard to a knowledge of the Supreme Being. [869]
Children would know about Him because they would from infancy
have heard older people mention Him. In the old days people
never did anything without first saying a prayer. The prayers [782]
always started out by mentioning the name of the "One above the
White Man," and then names of other beings followed.[6]

## TRAINING

Formal training, in skills necessary for women's work, was begun 868
for little girls at an early age. This was usually in the hands
of a female relative,—a grandmother or perhaps a widowed aunt,
—to whom the child would be sent at about the age of seven
years. The reason for removing a girl from her immediate family
circle was said to have been to protect her virginity. Her parents
wanted to send her "where no men were living, as they didn't
want a girl around home with her father, brother, male cousins."
Should there not be a suitable relative, however, the girls' parents
would keep her at home and she would receive training in domestic
duties from her own mother. In any case, the girl was sup-

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[6] Religion is treated in full in Cooper Ms. 1949.

868 posed to be watched over and kept under close supervision. For
[562] her there was much less freedom than for a boy of like age.

As a rare treat, a girl of eight or nine might have been allowed
857 to stay with a friend of her own age overnight, providing her guardian knew exactly where she was and that there was some responsible party to look after her. Boys of the same age and even younger could come and go more or less as they pleased. In
[764] illustration Al Chandler told of an incident in his childhood. "At the death of my uncle, the corpse was placed in a lodge removed at some distance from where he resided. I was only a little fellow at the time and I wandered over to that lodge. Not realizing my uncle was dead, I crawled under the covers. I was not missed from home and was not discovered until the next morning when my grandfather came to the lodge to mourn. Thereafter for a week or so my grandmother watched me when I set off from home, but when she saw I was steering clear of that particular lodge, she allowed me to go without saying anything. She knew I could take care of myself so she didn't care where I went or when I came home."

857 In spite of strict supervision of girls, sometimes they evaded
868 their guardians. Coming Daylight told of one of the "tricks" that she had used. "One night I heard there was dancing and my sister and I wanted to sneak out to enjoy the fun while my grandmother was sleeping. We rolled up our blankets and put them beside her. Fortunately she didn't awaken even when we came in. If she had known we were out she would have come after us and given us a good lecture when we got home."

868 So far as training in domestic tasks is concerned, it was considered an important part of a girl's duty to gather berries and to dig roots. Some older woman went with a group of girls to show them what to collect, pointing out at the same time the things that were not edible. Each girl worked and whatever she garnered would be given by her to her mother or grandmother. What was not used immediately would then be stored for winter use.

Learning to slice meat very thin for drying seemed to have been picked up easily by girls at playing "house." Skinning and butchering were much more difficult tasks which had to be learned carefully. These were considered mainly work for men, but it

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was useful if a woman knew how to do them, and only those who had mastered these skills were taken on hunting parties. Coming Daylight acquired this type of knowledge only after she was married, at which time she was only about eleven or twelve years old, and before she had borne any children. She gradually learned the names for each cut of meat and the certain ways of butchering each type of animal.

There were individual differences in the kinds and amount of work which a girl would learn. Some were more proficient than others, due mainly it would seem to the type of training received. Coming Daylight was an orphan and was raised by an extremely strict maternal grandmother, who made her stay by her side for hours as she worked along with her, correcting her mistakes and demonstrating the proper ways of doing things. Coming Daylight heard the other girls and boys outside playing and would sometimes cry because she had to learn a woman's work instead of joining in the fun. Singer, although raised by a grandmother, was allowed to play out much more than was Coming Daylight, and admittedly never mastered as many techniques as the latter. Garter Snake, who was chosen by her parents as Pipe Child when her father was Keeper of the Feathered Pipe, was well-trained by her mother, but apparently did not begin formal instruction at such an early age as did Coming Daylight.

Regardless of individual differences, however, one of the first acquired and most essential tasks was that of working hides. The first step was learning how to scrape buffalo hides. Apparently all women knew how to do this and, in the times before the buffalo disappeared, were kept constantly busy at it. After becoming proficient at scraping, the next process learned was that of tanning. There were various ways of preparing hides depending on the different uses to which they would be put, whether for lodge covers, clothing, parfleshes, and so on. Then came the important steps of cutting out and of sewing. Usually girls began by cutting out moccasins and finishing them off. Later came dresses and leggings. Knowing how to make parfleshes and to paint them was likewise considered an essential part of this early training for girls. It was only considerably later that the ability to fit together a lodge covering of buffalo skins was acquired. This was consid-

868 ered the most difficult of all tasks allotted to women and not every one was able to do it.

183 864 867 The whole training of the girl was oriented toward marriage. A girl was supposed to have been ignorant in sex matters until informed by an older person, presumably in most cases by a grandmother. Coming Daylight, for example, remembers very distinctly that when she was about ten years old and the man who became her first husband had asked her uncle for her, her grandmother warned her: "Don't be 'ashamed' of your husband." The old woman then told Coming Daylight what to expect as to the physical side of marriage. Her grandmother also told her many other things, as was usual for a girl about to be married. "Now you are going to be married. You be true to your man. If some young fellow comes to you and wants to 'throw in with you,' you tell him no. But refuse him in a nice way and don't say bad things. Try to get out of it nicely. Then go right to your husband and tell him what happened, because if he sees you talking to another man he might get the wrong impression and think you have consented. Moreover, never become jealous of your husband nor should you ever fight back at any woman who might attack you on account of wanting him. Just pity such a woman. Always remember you are the wife; the other woman is not married to him but you are."

Just before she went with her husband to his home, an uncle of hers came to Coming Daylight and told her to tend to her house well, to make clothes for her husband and to see to it that he was always nice and clean. Then he added that she should not get mad or pout if her husband should go out and stay away longer than she thought he should. He said: "When a woman gets mad from this cause, she wants to make her own life bad. When her husband goes around visiting other women, and his wife finds out, then she wants to run around with men. If she retaliates in this way she only gets herself in bad. What you should do when your husband goes out and stays late is to say nothing when he comes in. He will always come back to you. You just say to yourself that he is your man and that he won't leave you permanently for any other woman."

It would seem that girls, as part of their training, were con-

stantly admonished to stay at home after they were married and 183
not to go visiting and gossiping with other women. Mothers told 864
their daughters to be respectful to their husbands. When still 867
very young, a girl was taught to "always make a lot over a man."
She started with her father and was responsible, for instance, for
seeing to it that in the morning when he awakened there was water
beside him so he could wash his face before going for his
morning bath, and that his breakfast would be ready for him when
he came back therefrom. These are the kinds of things girls
would be expected to do later for their husbands.

All during the time they were learning domestic skills, girls 183
were told that they should keep everything that they own nicely
and to have on hand everything they may need. It was not good 867
to run around and borrow. "Keep your house clean and keep
everything in good order, then your husband will like to stay at
home." Again, "Don't let your husband's moccasins wear out
before you make another pair. Always have things prepared
ahead of time." Girls were told, too, that good wives took their
husband's moccasins off for them when they came home tired, and
so on.

Coming Daylight always admonished her daughters: "Never
talk back to your husband. Women have fiery tongues when they
get mad, and that is bad." It was nearly always taken for granted
by others that the wife was to blame if her husband beat her. [582]
Since it was customary for very young girls to marry men very
much older than they, such husbands took upon themselves the
role of disciplinarian.

While marriage was taken for granted, apparently a girl was 787
free to accept or to reject medicine power. Neither girls nor
women went on power quests, but some individuals were vouchsafed [562]
some kinds of supernatural power in dreams. While the
experience of Coming Daylight may be unique, it is illuminating.
"Even before I was married, I had a particular kind of dream
which indicated power to extract illness from the body of a patient.
This dream occurred four nights in succession. Each
morning I would tell my grandmother about it. The old woman
got angry each time and told me not to talk about it, to keep it to
myself so that I would become a great doctor. But I had already

787 made up my mind that I did not want such power, the immediate reason for my refusal being that I had seen doctors who swallowed what they had sucked from the weak spot in patients whom they cured, and I just couldn't bring myself to have to do likewise."

857 Although boys had much more freedom than had girls, they
562 too were assigned tasks at a fairly early age. One of the responsibilities of boys was to water the horses during the day. At about the age of fourteen, however, a boy would be required to take the horses out to graze immediately after taking his morning plunge. He would be gone perhaps three or four hours and would eat only after he returned.

857 The play of younger boys with bow and arrow was training for
868 later life. The older boys accompanied the men on hunting parties and by the time they were about 18 most were skilled hunt-
852 ers. Some families, it was said, took advantage of the fact that
[431] a boy would have killed his first big game,—antelope, deer, buffalo,
—by making a feast at which this game was served. On such an occasion the boy stood at the center and gave away property, such as horses and blankets provided by his father or uncle, in
[421] order to mark the event. This was considered training for the way he should behave in later life in regard to his own property.

857 Boys were trained in trapping as well as hunting. There were certain songs which were sung by grandparents as the boys danced
868 around in the lodge both before and after trapping. These songs
[533] were supposed to bring luck in finding game.

[777] Sometimes when older boys were out taking care of horses, they would band together, daub their faces and bodies with mud as "war paint," and make a "raid" on the camp in order to steal meat which was drying on racks. The women who had worked so hard to prepare the meat got angry and sometimes fought the boys with sticks. Usually, the boys were successful, and would then cook the meat and have a wonderful feast,[7] far outside the camp circle.

[554] Men encouraged their sons to be brave, and a boy would be anxious to go along on a real raiding party just as soon as possible because a young man had no standing until he had risked his life. An adolescent boy who accompanied a war party had to be a man

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[7] This type of raiding is also described by Kroeber, 1908, p. 182.

among men. It was a severe ordeal and the older men had no mercy on these youngsters. 857 868

Occasionally as training in bravery, the heart of a bear was taken raw and cut into small bits. After calling together the older boys and young men and lining them up, each one in turn was given a bit of the heart dipped in fresh blood and asked: "Well, are you going to have a brave heart?" Some were able to swallow it easily, but others could not stomach it. Those who were able to swallow and retain it were said to be the really brave ones.[8] [262]

It was indicated by many informants that in the old days a man would almost have to have had supernatural powers in order to be outstandingly successful in war or to achieve fame as a medicine man. In fact it was thought that supernatural powers could be helpful in many aspects of life including gambling and love. Guardians, however, used to warn the boys and young men under their care that "you can't get something for nothing." By this was meant that a person who accepted supernatural power would not live out his full span of life. Thus, according to The Boy, parents emphasized in training their sons that, rather than going on power quests, they should be ambitious to acquire fame and respect by developing their natural abilities. Nevertheless many sought and obtained supernatural powers, visions apparently often being vouchsafed in youth, although the power might not have been used until later in life. It was believed that those who accepted and used such supernatural powers died prematurely.[9] 787 778

## METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Oral instruction, or "lecturing," stands out in the Gros Ventre mind as the most important method of child training. All of our middle-aged and older informants agreed that some relative, often either the mother or the father, lectured their children almost every day, telling them what was right and what was wrong and "how to live." If boys and girls were present together, there were some subjects which could not be touched upon and would be reserved for fathers to speak about to their sons and for mothers 861

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[8] It was said that, in the distant past, the heart of an enemy was so devoured by warriors. For historical confirmation, see Henry, v. 2, p. 734. [266]

[9] Full discussion of supernatural powers is given in Cooper Ms., 1949.

861 to their daughters.[19] The lecturing of the child started when he was an infant and continued until adulthood had been attained. Those charged with the training of children felt it to be a duty. As Coming Daylight put it: "They talked to their children right from the start, and before the babies themselves were able to talk, they seemed to understand." Singer remarked that, because modern parents do not talk to infants as the old-fashioned ones used to do, present-day infants do not respond by trying to "talk back." Nowadays, the two old women insisted, even infants pay no attention to instruction, and as for older children, some go so far as to tell their elders to shut up!

Under the old regime, however, a child had to listen, whether he wanted to or not, and he had to retain, at least outwardly, a respectful attitude. Cora, for instance, said that she hated this being talked to. Her father was the one who did the lecturing in her family and he used to require that she stand in one spot and not move "while he preached about being good and the ways of doing everything." Singer and Coming Daylight admitted that it was tiresome for the child to be continuously lectured, but they insisted that this is the best way for children to learn. Children [856] are supposed to really grasp what is being said to them from about the age of four.

867 Thick remembers the general content of the lectures he heard from his mother to have run along these lines: "If you get a 183 mare, treat it well because mares will increase. Take good care of her. If you get a saddle, hang on to it. Robes, bridles, whips, are needed useful articles, keep them, don't give them away. If you don't keep these things you will have to go and borrow from someone else. That is bad. If you have to borrow a horse from some other boy, his family might become suspicious of you; yet if they refuse, there are hard feelings over it. Therefore when you get something, take good care of it.

"When you go out to play with your own things, your bow and arrows or hoop, others will want you to play with them and to bet with them. If you join in such games, somebody is likely to get mad because you have won and so he may beat you up. If he should, don't fight back. Let him take it out on you and don't fight back. 183

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[19] For details on kinship behavior, see pp. 107–08.

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"When you are out playing, if you are hungry and you want to eat, come home. Don't go to any other family to eat because people are fond of their food and might resent it. If a boy, some friend of yours, invites you to his home, don't go."

Garter Snake's father was the one who lectured his children,—three sons and three daughters. Since she was Pipe Child, when her father was Keeper of the Feathered Pipe, Garter Snake was talked to by him more often perhaps than were her siblings. Long after she was married, her mother used to remind her of the things her father told her. Some of these admonitions were as follows: "I want you to be an upright, honest and straight woman. If you listen to everything I tell you and do as I tell you, in the future you will thank me for it. Now don't think you are alone in this world because the One above the White Man sees everything that we do. Don't steal, don't lie, don't be tricky. Be honest about everything.

"When you grow up and finally have your own home, pity the [888] old men and pity the old women, pity the poor. If you see an old woman with a ragged dress, give her a blanket. Make moccasins for these old women. The same holds for these old men. If you see an old man whose leggings are torn, make leggings for him. If you see a poor person who needs clothes, give him some if you have any. If you do that the One Above who watches and looks at you doing those things, He is going to reward you.

"When you are married and have your own home, take care of it well. If you have horses, take care of them; try to have good property and take care of it. If you do that you will always have something. If you have horses of your own that will help your husband. He may not have any and you can help him along.

"Be good to everybody. If a man or woman comes to visit, [574] welcome them. Tell them: 'Come in and sit down.' Then feed them well regardless of whether they are poor or rich, young or old, or even children.

"Above all, don't you ever quarrel with anyone. Don't you [865] ever fight. Try to be friendly with everybody."

Charles Buckman's uncle, who, like Garter Snake's father, 183 867 was not a Christian, used to tell him: "You have eyes to see, a heart to think, and ears to hear. Listen to what I will tell you. You are a poor boy. As such, be faithful. Believe in the One Above the White Man. Pray to Him, ask Him to have pity on you and so make you a good man some day. Try to be good to all, especially when you become a man. Be good to the poor, be good to the old. Never take anything not belonging to you. Never [865] speak evil of other people. Try to be patient. If a man says anything wrong to you, and hurts your feelings, say nothing because if folks talk back it causes quarreling or fighting, which is not good. If a poor man asks you for anything, if you have it, be ready to hand it over to him. If you see anybody hungry and [888] you have it, feed him. If an old man or woman is in need and wants anything done, do it for him or her. If you do these things, the One Above will have pity on you."

685 867 183 All informants agreed that in addition to having been told to take care of whatever property they might have, they were instructed to regard the property rights of others. It was believed that, though the theft remained undiscovered, the thief would be punished by automatic supernatural sanction. "Something terrible would happen to anybody who stole something." Mary's grandmother, for instance, had told her time and again never to take anything that did not belong to her. To illustrate how well this had been instilled into her, she gave the following example. "On one occasion when I was a child, I found a really beautiful string of beads, but I did not take it. After I got to bed that night, however, I told my grandmother about it. When asked why I had failed to bring home the beads, I replied: 'I was afraid you would tell me that I had taken them from someone.' My grandmother merely remarked: 'Well, you should have brought them to me, or better, you should have taken me to where they were lying.' But when I took her to the spot the next day the beads were gone."

[764] This reminded Coming Daylight of an incident in her own childhood. "I was walking near a grove of trees where several corpses had been placed (in the traditional manner of disposing of the dead). I noticed a considerable amount of bear excrement and mixed in it were a number of elk teeth—the most valuable

trimming for women's clothing. I knew that the body of a girl 183
had been among those left in the branches of the trees at this 685
place, so I decided that the bear had disturbed the bodies and must
have eaten the cloth along with everything else. I stood there 867
quite a while wondering whether I should take those elk teeth. Finally I took them and having strung them on a piece of sinew laid them in the stream-bed with a rock covering them. When I went home I opened the matter with my grandmother by stating: 'A bear ate that girl who was buried in the elk tooth dress.' When my grandmother asked how I knew this, I told her about the elk teeth in the excrement. Whereupon my grandmother asked: 'Why didn't you take those teeth? They are valuable.' Feeling easier in my mind, I said: 'I was afraid you would accuse me of stealing them—but I did take them anyway!' My grandmother was glad and so I brought them from the creek and I was happy, too, since there were enough teeth to make two rows on my dress."

The usual procedure of careful parents when a child reported he had found some article was to first question him as to whether or not he had taken it from someone. Then the parent would go around and ask people if they had lost this certain article. If a child had stolen it he would thus be found out and it was believed that he would never steal anything again.

The rights of children to their own property were recognized 183
by elders and, while they admonished children to take good care 858
of their things, if a child wished to dispose of what belonged to
him no one would reprimand him for having done so. After all, 867
generosity is a trait that was much admired among the Gros Ventres. 421
Informants said that if, for instance, a man had given a horse to his daughter and she gave it away, he would say nothing to her about it. Should she ask him for another he might, however, tell her: "Well, I don't know—you might give it away." But he would never scold her about it.

Even if a child were flagrantly disobedient he would ordinarily 861
be punished only by a scolding rather than by whipping or deprivation. Singer and Coming Daylight both were shocked at the idea that a child might be punished by depriving him of something. They said: "Indians love their children and we don't think they would deprive them of anything. They just talk to their children

861 and tell them what is right." Coming Daylight gave an account of an occasion on which she was disobedient. "One of my relatives was very ill and my grandmother thought that if I would sacrifice a finger joint, he would get well. But I was a small girl, and I dreaded the idea of having part of my finger cut off, so I ran away. My uncle chased after me and told me never to come back. I yelled at him: 'I won't come back, but I am not going to have my finger cut off!' So I went far off and stayed out in the hills until my uncle came looking for me and brought me home again. Two nights after they had asked me to give up my finger, the relative died, but they didn't punish me."

[858] If a child were really lazy or "pouted too much," he might be "thrown out"—cases were mentioned where this had actually happened. The theory was that the child would then have to work much harder than he would have at home for whoever would take him in.

In the case of temper tantrums on the part of a very young child, he was first simply told to stop. Should he continue, his guardian would say: "Oh well, he doesn't know any better" and then douse him with cold water. It was said that he would get up immediately after that type of treatment, and would soon be cured.

If a child were naughty or made a mistake, his guardian would usually not reprimand him in public. He would wait for an opportunity to get him alone. As an example, in training for proper attitudes and behavior between brother and sister, the boy was told: "Be careful what you say in front of your sister." If the boy then made some remark he should not have made in the presence of his sister, his mother waited until the sister had gone out and then talked to him in a gentle way. Cora expanded on this by stating: "The Gros Ventres never bawl out anybody in front [648] of a third party. This is where the white social workers make their biggest mistake. They get everybody together in a central place and then proceed to reprimand the various ones in front of all the others. That is the worst thing that can happen—it hurts these Gros Ventres so badly."

Nevertheless, those in authority may give a severe "tongue lashing" to the culprit in private. As The Boy said when discussing discipline: "The Indian, when he was living the old life, had a

system of discipline, but it was not like that of the white man. 861
The Indian used his roaring voice and stinging words. When I was a boy there was one old man who had a crippled hand. On various occasions when we were told to keep quiet and we disregarded that appeal, that old man would sneak up to us and roar at us. Sometimes he would bluff mischievous boys by telling them: 'Come over here. I am going to work you over with this crippled hand,' but nobody would dare go near him. Then he would say: 'Well, give me one arrow apiece. I won't work you over this time—but next time I will surely do so!"

The bugaboo was used to threaten small children when they misbehaved. They were told that "someone" would come and take them away in a big sack. The story told by Singer and Coming Daylight regarding the bugaboo was that of a woman who put her disobedient son outside her lodge and this "someone" came along with a sack, put the child in it and hung the sack in a tree. Aside from this bugaboo, Coming Daylight could recall only one instance from her childhood where she was threatened through reference to "spirits." This was after she had swam the whole width of the Missouri River and back. She was, and still is, very proud of this feat, but her grandmother was angry with her for having been too bold in going so far. She scolded her saying: "Why did you do that? Don't you know there are all kinds of 'animals' in the deep water? They always grab what they want!" Sometimes, however, punishment in the form of "something awful will happen" was indicated for the wrong doer.

One point on which Coming Daylight and the other old women 183
were extremely emphatic was that in the old days the Gros Ventre never tried to scare children by mentioning the Supreme Being 861
in connection with punishment. These old women recalled that in 776
the lectures they heard, and in the scoldings they received, the emphasis was much more on social motivation. Children were told: "Nobody will like you if you do so and so." Or: "People don't like anyone who is onery. They like those who are generous and kind." Self-regarding motives were stressed in some situations. "Don't gamble lest you lose something we value," "Do what is right so as to keep your man," "Be industrious so as to show off what a good worker you are," "Don't run around with

183 other men so you will avoid your husband's suspicion," and so on. Sometimes the appeal was made by a parent: "If you do such 861 and such a thing well, I will be proud of you." In general it would seem that the positive side rather than the negative, was stressed.

777 It was more often the men informants who mentioned supernatural motives proposed for proper conduct. They remembered 867 that they were told that the Supreme Being would "have pity" on 888 them if they followed the proper code of behavior. Both men and women mentioned, however, that respect for the aged was instilled because "people didn't become old for nothing. They had a blessing from the Supreme Being to live long lives. Whenever you see old people attempting to do something and are having difficulties, you should go right in and do it for them. Help old people out and then ask them to intercede for you that you will have good health, a long life and success in all your undertakings."

867 The example of others was recognized as effective in child-574 training. Al feels that the Gros Ventres were well brought up in the old days "because children were taught to stick to the rules and they had the good example of adults to follow." In describing the duty of hospitality, Coming Daylight said: "My grandmother was a great one to have a lot of visitors because she was generous, and so I got a good example at home." It was said by others of Coming Daylight: "She feeds everyone who comes along just as she used to see her uncle (mother's brother) do. She takes after her uncle in lots of ways."

In lecturing to the young, examples of actual behavior of persons, both good and bad, were often given. For instance, in warning boys of the evils of gambling, reference would be made to men who would otherwise have had promising careers but who ruined their chances by too heavy stakes which they lost. Fear [754] of offending those who had supernatural power lest they retaliate by means of black magic was implicit in at least some of the admonitions. This was so, for instance, in instructing young men to stay away from the wives of "powerful" men, as well as in warning girls to decline improper proposals "in a nice way."

## CHAPTER IX

## MARRIAGE

### Polygyny and the Child-bride

The institution of the child-bride, combined with polygyny, was 545 characteristic of Gros Ventre marriage up to about 1880. How 582 far back it was practiced is difficult to say. Our informants who themselves were married off as children of ten or eleven to their first husbands about the year 1865, took the custom for granted and so far as they knew "it had always been that way."[1]

All girls were given in marriage before puberty, and usually as wives to older men with independent households. Because of the disparity in age between husband and child-bride, many of these girls were widowed early and remarriage was quickly arranged for them, even if the widow were not claimed by her husband's brother. [586] Moreover, divorce or separation initiated by the husband was relatively easy and frequent. Consequently the majority of Gros Ventre women knew at least three or four different [587] husbands, and often in fairly rapid succession. Upon successive remarriages the wife's age came to approximate more closely that 582 of her husband.

Young men were not eligible for marriage until about twenty. By that time a young man would have attained proficiency in hunting and have taken the first steps in ceremonial life, being a member of one or other of the two adult men's societies, either the Wolf-men or the Stars. In addition he should have war-deeds to his credit and some property of his own, especially horses stolen from the enemy, in order to qualify as husband. In view of the 582 fact, however, that very young girls were given more often to 587 older already-married men, most young men marrying for the first time had as wife "an older experienced woman." Actually

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[1] It was believed that a girl could not menstruate until after she had experienced sexual intercourse. If, therefore, a girl had her first menses [841] before she had been given in marriage, her family would be disgraced.

582 587 this meant that a young man's first wife was not necessarily "older" in years than he, but that she was "experienced" in marriage, having been either widowed or divorced, perhaps several times.

Only as an exception was a bachelor married to a child-bride. [543] One case of the kind which was recalled concerned a young man who was a "beloved-child" and consequently highly favored by his parents. He however refused to "settle down" when his parents suggested various marriage partners to him, and acceded to their request only when they obtained for him the hand of a young girl who had not previously been married.

582 595 587 Young men just starting their careers were urged to seek as wives among the "older" women, those who were known as "good workers" and who had acquired some property of their own. A wife of this kind could help him become established, and "if he amounted to anything" it would not be long before he could take a second wife, perhaps a younger sister of his first one. Then, as he became more prominent, he would acquire one or two additional wives.[2] To this type of man child-brides usually were given. It was said that an outstanding man had three or four wives at the same time, but conditions were such that he would have had a dozen different ones in the course of his career.

587 595 A man was considered fortunate if he obtained as wife the oldest of several sisters as the chances were great that these others might be offered to him. "If a man married the oldest girl in a family, and her folks liked him and saw that he was a good provider and that he was trying to live right, they would give him the two or three others as they came of age." Many instances were given wherein several sisters were married to the same man. On the other hand it was said that, if a man, who was already married to one or more sisters, asked for another, he might be refused and that "there was nothing he could do about it."

Since the levirate was permitted, it was possible that a man could claim the wife or wives of his deceased brother. This was seemingly carried out infrequently, however, since only two instances could be recalled.[3] Of these two, one involved Coming

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[2] For a discussion of the economic basis of polygyny, see pp. 73–74.

[3] "The brother of a dead man sometimes married his widow, but this was not always the case." Kroeber, 1908, p. 180.

Daylight and her sister, who were married, for a short while after 587
their first husband died, to his classificatory brother. The other 595
concerned an outstanding woman, Woman Chief, who was said to have been so highly valued by her husband's people that "she was kept in his family by marrying her to three brothers [successively]."

### REGULATIONS

Marriage was prohibited for those related by blood, no matter 582
how remote the tie. If, however, a couple were in "good faith," so to speak, and it was discovered later on that they were distant kin, it was not considered necessary for them to separate on that account.[4] Affinal relatives were likewise barred as possible marriage partners, except those who were classified as in-laws of the same generation.[5] In other words, the levirate and sororate were [587]
permitted, so that any who addressed each other as brother-in-law and sister-in-law respectively were possible mates, but relatives-by-marriage in any other category were prohibited from contracting marriage. The far-reaching effects of this latter regulation can be seen from the following case. "Not so many years ago, a Gros Ventre woman was the subject of a great deal of gossip because she married late in life a man who, many years previously, had for a time been married to a widow of her maternal uncle. People didn't like it and thought she shouldn't have married that man, even though times had changed and the whites wouldn't count them as being related to each other at all."

### ARRANGEMENTS

As a rule, marriage arrangements were made between the hus- 584
band-to-be and one or other of the bride's male kinsmen,—father, 562
uncle or brother. Either side could take the initiative, but the bride herself was not consulted. Coming Daylight summed up the prevailing attitude in this way: "When I was young, a girl's life was not her own. When a girl was about seven she was sent away from her home to a grandmother or widowed aunt to be [868]
trained to do a woman's work.

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[4] See also the discussion of band affiliation and exogamy, pp. 29-31.

[5] For kinship classification, see pp. 124-25.

584 trained to do a woman's work. Then when she was ten or eleven
562 she was handed over to some man. They thought that if they gave her to her husband when she was so young she would get attached to him and make him a good wife. The Gros Ventres didn't
[587] want a woman to get in the habit of running around with different men, so a woman's folks worried if she was unmarried too long [after being divorced or widowed] because she might do something bad."

587 There is some evidence that as a woman became older, if she had occasion to remarry, she was somewhat more free to express her choice, although presumably a male relative would still be in the position of making the actual decision. It was said that
584 younger men, especially those seeking to marry "older" women,
832 "were afraid of their tongues" and felt more confident of success in possession of "love medicine." Al Chandler, for instance, was offered a love charm which he refused, but the speech of his uncle on that occasion throws some light on a situation of this kind. His uncle had told him: "Now you are a young man and you will be thinking about women. Maybe you want to get married and have picked out a woman and she doesn't want you. Maybe you are not good enough for her and, when you ask her, she will run you down plenty. Some women are swell-heads and can make a man feel cheap. It hurts a fellow to hear things like that—but that is what this charm is for. You take this and keep it in your pocket safely and do not show it to anyone or let anyone know you have it. Now if this woman hurts your feelings, go at night to where she lives and watch carefully, being sure you have the right one. Then when she goes out of the lodge to relieve herself, watch her so you can locate the exact spot. Then open this little packet and dip in it the tip of a little sliver of wood. Go over to the spot and stick the sliver right in the ground on the spot where she urinated and walk away. That is all you have to do, and in a very short time this woman will come running after you. You tell her: 'What are you doing that for? I don't want you.' She will get so anxious that she will beg you to have her."

585 Regardless of whether the man were the suitor, or whether the woman's relatives offered her in marriage, the marriage was validated through presents given by the groom. Traditionally at

least one horse was included, but no given amount of property 587 was specified nor did bargaining enter into the negotiations.[*] Following the pattern of ostentatious liberality, a man could reflect honor upon himself by giving generously, and one with such a [554] reputation was preferred over a poor or stingy one. Whatever the groom offered was divided among the bride's relatives. As one woman said: "A husband always gave something for his wife, no matter how many wives he acquired, because this is what makes it 'legal.' Then the girl's father and brother divided the presents. If the brother arranged the marriage, he would say to the father 'Here is a horse for you.' And if the father or uncle had been approached by the husband, then they did the same way. Sometimes even the father's sister was given a horse or something else when her niece married."

Although it was not obligatory, a bride's family often provided her with goods to take to her marriage, especially if it were her first one. Singer explained in regard to Coming Daylight: "Her family was well-to-do and showed how much they thought of themselves by giving her a good send-off. You should have seen her going off to her first husband. She was only about ten years old and she looked so tiny leading that big horse. On the horse was a fine fringed saddle and the travois was just piled up with painted parfleshes and other things."

The following account of the marriage of Coming Daylight's 585 daughter shows how the pattern was carried out under changed 179 conditions: "One night when the family returned from a dance they found a letter addressed to the oldest son, Ed, from a man whom he liked, asking for Ed's sister, Gertrude. When his father came in from tending the horses they told him about the proposal and he agreed right away, saying: 'We are still keeping her and she is a big girl. I'm glad this offer has been made.' So a week later they loaded a new buggy with Gertrude's things,—bedding, beds, trunk, sewing machine, etc.,—and her father drove this to the creek where the dance hall was located. Meanwhile Coming Daylight took her daughter to the house of the man who had asked for her and left her there sitting on this man's bed. The groom did not appear at the Grass Dance that evening, even though he

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[*] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 180.

585 178 was Keeper of the Crow Belt, as he had taken Gertrude and camped at the Mission. The next morning the couple was married by the priest and Gertrude's father brought the buggy full of goods and gave them all that, including the team of horses. Everybody could see that this couple started off with a lot."

585 Instead of making arrangements, a man might simply send his daughter to become the wife of another man without forewarning him. The recipient of such a bride could not well refuse her and was supposed to act as though he were happy to have her, regardless of how many other wives he might have or his real feelings in the matter. He, too, would normally give some kind of present to her father, the amount depending somewhat on the previous reputation of the bride. On the one side, she might have been given merely to get her off her father's hands, on the other, she might have been highly desirable as a wife and her father would have taken this means to show generosity on his own part and to honor the husband he had selected.

583 Sometimes elopements occurred, but this was very rarely if ever the case, so far as the girl was concerned, until she had been given at least once in marriage arranged by her relatives. 684 Should a married woman run off with another man, it was up to her husband to deal with the situation. If, however, she had been widowed or divorced, and eloped before another marriage had been arranged, her relatives would be angry, but the affair could be patched up if the usual presents to them were forthcoming from the man.

59 There was no hard and fast rule in regard to residence. Matrilocal residence in the same lodge was incompatible with the observance of the mother-in-law taboo and it was said that if a man wished his son-in-law to remain with him, he provided the separate lodge and all the equipment.[7] The tendency seems to have been toward patrilocal residence in general, although it was not unusual for a couple to move back and forth. Coming Daylight lived most of her married life with her husband's people. As a child-bride she first lived in the lodge with her husband's parents; later on she and her husband went to her people, living with her

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[7] Obligations between kin are discussed pp. 109–10. Kroeber, 1908, p. 180, states that a young married man often lived with his father-in-law.

grandmother while her uncle's wives were making a lodge which they gave to her; then they went back and her new lodge was the sixth in a row, the five others being those of her husband's relatives who habitually camped together. 591 When this husband died, she was claimed by a classificatory brother of her husband's and remained with the same people. [582] This marriage did not last very long and, when her uncle arranged another marriage, again she lived near the man's relatives rather than her own. Since this too was of short duration, she remarried another time and lived in the same lodge as her husband's mother and unmarried brothers, until, at the time the Gros Ventre settled down (after 1883), her husband got a farm of his own and his mother went to live with one of her daughters.

## Relations between Co-Wives

Subsidiary wives were known as "helpers" to the senior wife and co-wives addressed each other as "rival," unless they were related to each other and employed the ordinary form of address as "sister."[6] The senior wife distributed the household tasks and the "helpers" were allotted the heavier work, which usually included the procuring of fuel and water. Nevertheless all women were expected to be industrious and the senior wife as a rule enjoyed no more leisure or freedom than the others. In explaining the situation, Cora referred to her mother's experience. "My mother was always that kind of 'helper' but she didn't seem to mind it. After all, there were so many women who were 'helpers' and, as long as they got their work done, it didn't seem to matter who was 'boss' and who was 'helper.' They used to say in fact that some women preferred to be 'helpers' because while doing their jobs like going after water, they would have a chance to get away by themselves for a while—their husbands couldn't keep such close watch over them." 595

One of the advantages of living in a polygynous household was

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[6] The Gros Ventre word for subsidiary wives, *atsd'anhiniya*, although at present sometimes translated as "slaves" as well as "helpers," is etymologically the same as the term applied to younger men who were appointed on ceremonial occasions to act as "waiters" for the principal performers. The term *inî'isag*; "rival," was used between co-wives who were not kin.

595 said to have been that the wife who was pregnant, whether senior or subsidiary, could be well cared for and was relieved of the heavier domestic tasks until a considerable time after the child was born. Furthermore, the children of all wives were considered [858] equal in status. "As long as a man claimed the children as his own, he treated them all the same way, whether they were the children of older or younger wives." That differential treatment was sometimes accorded children by their father can be seen from the following case, although it is doubtful whether the father distinguished between his daughters simply on account of the relative position of their mothers. Singer, however, implied that it was so in giving the account of her experience: "When I was married as a younger wife to a certain man, he certainly made a difference between my child and that of his older wife. Both of us had girls, but one time, for instance, when I was out getting wood, they threw my little girl right out of the lodge. A neighbor took her in and when I returned this neighbor said to me: 'I notice they don't seem to care much for this little girl.' So after that I would have to take her with me, carrying a heavy pack on my back and dragging my little one along by the arm. Although my husband never let me use a horse, he would put the child of his other wife on the saddle when he was riding, and often he would hold her in his arms when he was around the camp. One of the worst things I had to endure was that when my husband would return from trading at Fort Benton with goodies like candy and fruit, my little girl was never given any and had to stand by and watch the other child eating. Finally it got so bad that my father took his grandchild and raised her. But I must say that this husband of mine was a really mean man."

587 The general feeling prevailed that sisters got along together more peaceably as co-wives than did "rivals." In any case the 595 sororate was preferred and it was said that parents were better satisfied to send a child-bride into the household of her sister. This attitude was exemplified by Singer's father in the following account which she gave: "I had been given to my sister's husband when I was just a child. It wasn't a real marriage because I didn't stay long enough. I was sent home by him because he thought I would rather play than work, and my sister took up for

me and he didn't send for me to come back. Not long after that 587
though, my sister died, and her husband's other two wives came
after me. I was playing out on the ice when they came and told 595
me they were going to take me back with them. Ignorant as I
was, I said I would go, and that I would have to tell my father
first. But my father said: 'No. You shouldn't go with them.
Those two women are not related to you and they might be mean
to you. If your sister were still living, I would see to it that you
went back to that man.' So those women said nothing more and
I never heard from them or their husband again."

It was also thought that if the older wife were the sister of 585
a child-bride she might be more willing to "protect" her. The 587
husband of so young a wife was supposed to "wait a while" be-
fore claiming the marital right, and some men actually did so. 595
Dressed-in-White for instance deferred the consummation of his marriage for over two years after Coming Daylight had been given to him at about the age of ten. Other men were not so considerate, however, and if an older wife tried to delay the procedure it was interpreted as being done not out of jealousy but through fear of consequences to so young a child. The husband alone determined the use of the marital right and such interference as another wife could offer would be only indirect. This is shown in the following account which concerns a woman well-known to both Singer and Coming Daylight. "One night soon after her little sister had been sent to their husband, this woman overheard him say to the girl: 'Make your bed wider, I am going to sleep with you.' Her own bedding was on the opposite side of the fire from that of her sister and she decided to try to discourage her husband from this undertaking. As she had expected, the husband that night covered up the fire so the lodge would be dark. On the sly, however, she was able to poke the fire so it flared out brightly. He got up and dimmed it once more, but again she made it flare. This was repeated several times and once she heard him say angrily; 'Oh, this is such good wood, it burns too well—I wish I could kill it!" Finally to her dismay she heard him whisper to the girl: 'I will take you outside because I can't seem to make it dark in here. You must not scream or cry out though because

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587 your sister is alseep.' She was unhappy that her efforts had failed,
595 but of course she didn't dare do anything more."

In confirmation of the theory that sisters lived in harmony as
co-wives, Coming Daylight said that she and her younger sister
595 had gotten along well together, but the two had some difficulties with a "rival" in one of their marriages. She added that whether wives were kin or not was less important than "the kind of women they were who lived in the same lodge." Cora gave an interesting illustration of the personality factor involved. Her mother once was married to the same husband of both her older and younger sisters. The youngest of the trio knew that their father had rejected her when she was born. The order to abandon the infant had been carried out, and she was found and adopted by a friend of her father's who raised her as his own. Cora said: "My mother and her older sister got along just fine. But the younger one never hit it off with these other two. It seemed like she was always jealous of them and took every chance she could find to get them in bad with their husband. She was kind of 'tricky.' Although as usual they lived in the same lodge, with their husband, she had her meals separately from the other two, she fetched water only for her own use, and on nice days when they sat outside the lodge she put up her shelter apart from theirs. Things were so bad between her and the other two, even after this common marriage was finished and they had separate husbands, that I grew up without realizing that she was my mother's sister. So that is the reason I feel no responsibility for her now."

Sometimes a senior wife of bad disposition made it very hard for a very young "rival," especially if she were in her husband's favor and the subsidiary wife were not. Singer told of one of her experiences with such a "rival." "I was much younger than this woman and she treated me abominably and sometimes she even beat me. One time my father found me crying after this woman had hit me, and he told me: 'You are getting to be a big girl now. You ought not to let her treat you like that. You should fight for yourself.' So the next time this woman pulled my hair, I grabbed her just as though I had turned into a bear, and held her to the ground and almost killed her. Those outside the lodge heard the commotion and someone yelled: 'Tie them together! Tie them together!' so I jumped up and ran as hard as I could. Finally 595 after wandering around a long time, not caring whether I lived or died, a man on horseback caught up with me. Telling me how dangerous it was to be out alone on account of possible capture by the enemy, he persuaded me to go back. Nobody said anything to me directly, but one of my husband's relatives did take up for me by saying insultingly to my husband: 'You would have such a one for a boss wife. She is ugly, and has a shaggy head, and she doesn't even know how to do a woman's work properly—blood runs out of the meat she prepares!' The older wife left me alone after that incident."

Nevertheless Singer admitted that in spite of her unhappy life with co-wives in two or three of her marriages, when she was married to Iron Bucket, she and her "rival" cooperated very nicely and were never jealous of each other or quarrelsome. All the women too agreed that, while the husband did not approve of hair-pulling and "jaw-fights" among his wives, and could resort to stern measures to prevent it, there were many polygynous households where peace and harmony reigned.

### AUTHORITY OF THE HUSBAND

The husband was expected to assume complete responsibility 593
for his wife and had the right to enforce obedience. It was per- 562
haps inevitable that some men used their authority in an arbitrary manner. The following was one among many examples offered in proof of this point. "There was a man who was known to be very stingy. On one occasion his wife cooked more meat than he thought she should have prepared. He was very angry with her and, in order to punish her, he made a big pile of the meat and forced her to eat every scrap of it. It made her very sick and she had to vomit a couple of times before she could get it all down. But she preferred to be sick rather than to get a beating."

It was said that wife-beating was very common and that in many cases it was unjustified. Singer gave part of her own experience as a sample. "My husband wouldn't allow me to go anywhere away from the lodge except to do the necessary jobs of getting wood and water. The whole time I was married to him I attended only one celebration. That time he more or less had to let

593 me go because by mother's brother was in the Sacrifice Dance and
562 I was supposed to be there to give things away in his honor. He was mean about it, but I got to that one thing. Another time though, I was scraping hides and I heard it announced in the camp circle that a relative of mine had been killed at war. Of course I went right away to mourn for him. But when I got back, my husband was furious. He yelled at me: 'You ought to stay home and attend to your work!' and then gave me an awful beating."

It was usually of little avail for a woman to return home with grievances against her husband because it was assumed that a wife deserved the type of treatment she received. Generally her
593 family would send her back to her husband promptly and often with a present for him to show their good will. Only under ex-
586 ceptional circumstances was the wife allowed to initiate separation from her husband. If he grossly neglected her and showed his indifference openly, she might be permitted to remain with her family. Should the husband not send for her, they were then free to arrange for her another marriage. Coming Daylight gave as an example her own experience, which was considered as somewhat unusual. "My uncle had arranged as our third marriage for my younger sister and me to go to a man who later turned out to be a poor provider. He seldom got buffalo meat, and he didn't water the horses, or do the other things he was supposed to. He was so busy chasing other women he didn't have time for anything else! One day, however, a friend of his came and told us that our husband was planning to publicly throw us away. His uncle came to see our husband that same day and tried to persuade him not to do it. Among other things he told him: 'You have such nice quiet industrious women. Just think of all the robes they have dressed for you!' But our husband just sat there with his head bowed and didn't say anything, and we knew then that he was going to do it. So I told my sister when he went out: 'We will get ready and throw him away before he has a chance.' I had a horse of my own, and we packed all our belongings as quickly as possible and went back to our uncle. When he found out what that man was going to do, of course he didn't make us go back. Our husband was in the wrong. He didn't

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have any reason to suspect us [of infidelity] so he shouldn't have been planning to get rid of us." 586

It was said that in case a husband abused his wife without reason his relatives remonstrated with him, reminding him, for instance, that if he acquired a reputation for ill-treating his wife he might have difficulty in obtaining additional wives of good reputation. Some claimed that his maternal uncle could go so far as to remove the wife from her husband's household "until he came to his senses." Such interference was however seemingly rare. A wife was seldom given the benefit of any doubt.

[684] The husband had the right to punish, even with death, any departure from the standard of chastity set for women.

593 Most of the harsh treatment accorded to wives was believed to have been the result of just suspicion of their infidelity, where sufficient evidence was lacking to prove it. Girls were warned before marriage to so conduct themselves as to avoid their husbands' jealousy at all costs. They were told, for instance, that when visiting other women it was well to be chaperoned since otherwise a jealous husband could magnify an innocent visit into an incipient affair with the woman's husband. While it was considered within the proprieties for women to go out and count [726] coups on the enemy fallen near camp, "they didn't approve of women chasing off on horseback to 'hit the enemy' because their husbands were sure to suspect they were off to meet some man." A girl was instructed by her relatives to yield willingly to her husband when he claimed his marital rights lest he interpret her reluctance as preference for another.

593 684 On the other hand, when there was reasonable proof of the wife's infidelity, the husband was more or less forced by public opinion to take some action against her. He was, however, allowed considerable latitude in choosing among several equally honorable alternatives.

The extreme punishment was that of death, and apparently it was not uncommonly applied. Among the cases described was the following which concerned a contemporary of Singer and Coming Daylight. "On one occasion a man discovered that one of his wives was missing. As usual in such circumstances, he inquired whether any man in the camp was unaccounted for. He soon

593 684 learned that his wife had gone off with a certain one and set out in pursuit. He was in a rage as he met the lovers, who had turned back toward the camp. The man fled, leaving the wife to face her husband's fury. He commanded her to dismount and then tore her robe from her. After cutting off her breasts and her arms, he abandoned the body and returned home."

According to our informants, however, not all cases were so clearly defined. Some women lost their lives merely because their husbands were suspicious. A man who acted without sufficient evidence ran some slight risk that his wife's family would avenge her death, but it was usually assumed that the wife must have been guilty. This was the situation in regard to a cousin of Singer's about whom she gave the following account. "This cousin of mine was a very beautiful woman. Her husband's lodge was close to that of Sits Like A Woman, one of the most famous chiefs the Gros Ventres ever had. This woman was fleshing a buffalo hide one day, and the chief saw her there outside her lodge. He said to Coming Daylight, then a very small girl, 'Run over to that woman who is tanning and see what she says to you.' So, childlike, she ran over there and told the woman: 'Sits Like A Woman told me to come over to the woman who is tanning and see what she tells me.' The woman said: 'Sh-h, you mustn't talk like that.' Being young and innocent Coming Daylight didn't realize the situation, and reported to the chief that she had been hushed up. The chief said: 'Well, who would be afraid of him [the husband]. What is she afraid of him for?' Now the husband was inside his lodge at the time, and overhearing this, he imagined his wife was running with this great chief. He bided his time and it so happened that the woman, who was a friend of the chief's wife, went one day to that lodge and asked her friend for something to eat. She was really hungry, and while she was sitting there eating, her husband came to the lodge. The chief said: 'Come in. I will give you a drink.' But the man did not accept the invitation, and merely said to his wife: 'You needn't come back!' This boded no good, so the frightened woman went to her mother's lodge. Her mother was very much upset, and was calling for protection for her daughter, when the husband came with his gun and shot his wife six times. No one retaliated."

Instead of killing an adulterous wife, or one so suspected, the 684
husband might disfigure her and send her away. Coming Daylight witnessed the following scene when she was a child. "She had been sent on an errand by her grandmother to a lodge at some distance from her own. About half-way to her destination as she approached a clump of trees she heard a woman screaming. She then saw that this woman was standing there with her hair tied to the limb of a tree. The woman's husband cut off her nose, and left her tied there and bleeding. Coming Daylight was so frightened that she ran, and on her way back went around the other way to avoid passing that spot again. She doesn't know who released the woman, but she does recall that the woman was so ashamed that she hardly ever went outside her lodge, and if anyone came in she would hold her hand over her face. Ever after that, whenever [201]
Coming Daylight met that man, she would make a gesture toward him [double hand into fist, then force fingers out, spreading them wide apart], which means 'I hate you.' Her grandmother used to tell her not to do that lest that man harm her through supernatural means, but she would answer: 'I don't care if he has power. He is cruel and I hate him. We all have to die sometime.'"

The cutting off of the nose was said to be rather a Piegan than a Gros Ventre practice. Cutting off the ears was perhaps a more common form of punishment inasmuch as there is a word designating a woman known to have been unfaithful, and which refers to having the ears cut off.

The adulterous woman whose hair was cut by her husband was
not marked permanently as were the others, but it was a severe [832]
punishment nonetheless because long thick hair was one of the chief criteria of beauty in women as well as in men. But whatever the form of disfigurement inflicted by the husband, the woman would be cast aside by him and would have to seek refuge with some of her relatives. The family, especially her brothers, would feel keenly the disgrace, but as Singer put it, "Mothers would feel sorry for their daughters and could not refuse to take them in, and they would take their children, too, should they have any. It was very seldom a man would keep the children of a wife sent away for adultery."

Finally, a wronged husband could satisfy his honor by accept-

684 ing indemnity from his wife's lover and allowing her unharmed to go to him. This solution was often resorted to and in fact was the one that was urged upon both parties concerned. It was customary for the paramour to offer compensation, although an occasional individual tried to dispose of an unwanted wife with profit to himself by taking the initiative in demanding indemnity. If there were no real evidence of wrong-doing, or if the man in question wished to brave the consequences, he might refuse. One instance was given by Singer concerning a man who, returning home one night, saw a young man crouched beside the lodge. "Although he took after the young man when he ran away, he could not catch him. The next day he told one of his wives—the sister of the one whom he pretended to suspect—to take her younger sister to the young man and demand in return a gun and a horse. The elder sister took up for the younger one and refused. So the husband told his oldest wife, unrelated to the other two, to carry out his orders. This one did as she was told. When confronted by the demand, however, the young man said: 'There is no truth in it. The old man did see something that made it look bad for me, but it wasn't what he thought.' The husband did not care to force the issue, since real evidence was lacking, and that was an end to the matter." Another example shows that even when the husband had evidence of his wife's infidelity he could not always collect indemnity. The husband in question sent his wife to her lover with a long list of things which he requested in return. The paramour, who did not want the woman as his wife, refused to pay the indemnity. "Perhaps another man would have killed his wife's lover when he refused, but this one took the easier
[682] way by cutting off his wife's hair and turning her loose." In case the husband killed the paramour, it was interpreted as murder and he was subject to retaliation.

[554] A man who kept as wife a woman known to be unfaithful to him lost status. He would be considered weak and was subject to
684 humiliating taunts by his enemy-friends. Nevertheless some men
558 braved adverse public opinion out of deep affection for their erring wives. While not all went so far as Sits Like A Woman, his case is an interesting one. It was related by The Boy as follows.

"The famous chief Sits Like A Woman was at the height of

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his popularity and power when he caught *in flagrante delicto* the youngest of his four current wives. He failed to act immediately, so the father of the young man with whom she had been discovered began to think of a way to save his son [fearing that Sits Like A Woman planned to injure him]. He decided to approach one of the ceremonial grandfathers of the chief and ask him to intercede. The ceremonial grandfather accepted the mission. He told Sits Like A Woman that the young man's father had such a high regard for him that he would not like to see his household disturbed any further and that, if he would consider this request, he should name the price. The chief listened very attentively and finally replied: 'Grandfather, I will do as you say. I have been thinking what I should do about this, and I have not punished my unfaithful wife nor even scolded her. Since it is you who came here to make this request of me, I will solve the situation in this way. Go back and tell the old man who sent you that I want his son's racehorse and eight other well-broken horses, and I want that old man to come over here and escort his new daughter-in-law back to his home. She is just as she always was. I have not disfigured her nor punished her, so he can make use of her in his household. When he carries out this demand, I will forget the whole matter.' The ceremonial grandfather was highly pleased and praised the chief for removing the stigma from his home by relinquishing his unfaithful wife. The father of the young man immediately set about getting the required horses and he and his wife loaded some of them with clothing and other articles. Together they led the horses toward the lodge of the chief, ostentatiously singing in his praise as they went. The old man even danced as he approached the lodge. After handing over the goods, the couple, followed by their new daughter-in-law, went back to their own lodge, all three singing as they went.

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"This should conclude the story of how a great chief received indemnity. There was a sequel, however, which illustrates that even the greatest and bravest warriors may succumb to the weakness of love and affection for their wives. On that very same day, about dusk, the chief's 'heart failed him.' He ordered the nine horses to be turned loose so that they could return to the camp from which they had come, although he kept the clothes and other

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articles which had been given him. Then he told two of his wives to go to the camp and call from outside the lodge the name of that youngest wife, and, when she came out, to bring her back to him without offering any explanation. This placed Sits Like a Woman in a difficult position, giving his enemy-friends plenty of ammunition since they could justly taunt him that a woman had gotten the better of him. He was eventually able to live it down, however, so that although it was a temporary set-back to his colorful career, it did not mar it completely as might have been the case for a lesser man."

The above case was exceptional in that no others could be recalled wherein a man who had accepted indemnity actually took back his wife. Nevertheless other instances were given of men who disregarded public opinion to the extent that they ignored flagrant infidelity on the part of their wives. Usually however if the wife in question did not mend her ways, even the most tolerant husband lost patience. By giving her away quite casually and without compensation, he retrieved his reputation since he thus indicated that it was indifference toward her rather than the weakness of love which had caused him to overlook her infidelity.

One instance was given by Coming Daylight. "One of my uncle's wives was continually running away with different men and he allowed her to return each time without punishment. I was still a child and one day, for instance, I went with this woman for water rather far from camp. When we got to the creek, one of her lovers grabbed her and wouldn't let her go. Finally I got tired of waiting and called out that I was going home and would tell on them. Still she didn't come, so I left. My uncle asked me why I had come alone, so I told him what had happened. But when that woman showed up, my uncle said nothing to her. A long time went by. Then on one occasion when we were camped near the Bear Paws, there was a crowd of people, all more or less drunk, in my uncle's lodge. They called me in because I did not drink and, since my uncle was Keeper, they had to have someone to look after the Flat Pipe. So I was there and saw my uncle staggering around. His nose was running and he called a man by name and said: 'Come and clean my nose!' The man obliged him and my uncle said, pointing to that unfaithful wife of his:

'It is a good thing you cleaned my nose, because for that I am giving you that woman over there.'" 684 558

A husband who had harbored an unfaithful wife was likewise within his rights in "throwing her away." This was accomplished by his going to a public gathering and simply throwing down a stick to indicate that he was through with her. Whoever wished might pick up the stick and claim her as his wife without giving any compensation. 684 586

It was said, too, that if a man was "big enough" to allow his wife to go unpunished for adultery he usually would not refuse to eventually let her go to some lesser man who demeaned himself by asking for her. Thick related details of several transactions of this kind which occurred when he was a young boy. One of these was as follows:

"There was a man who had several wives, perhaps four. One day another man came to his lodge. He invited him in and said: 'This is the first time you ever came into my lodge, my friend. You must have a reason to come now, after all this time.' Then he said to his wife: 'Woman, get up and cook for my friend.' So the visitor spoke up: 'Well, my friend, the purpose of my coming here is to ask you for that Arapaho woman. I am not married now, I haven't a wife at present and I need a wife.' The host replied: 'All right, my friend, she is yours. After you eat, you could take her home.' When he had finished eating, the visitor said: 'Well, my friend, I have to go a little further. I want that boy of hers too.' The host answered: 'I hate to let my children go, but since he is so small you could take him, but don't ask for any of the others.' So the visitor, happy that he had gotten this woman without much talk and a boy as well, said: 'Well, my friend, since you are so good to me and give me your boy, I will give you a horse, my last horse.' It turned out that he was as good to this boy, whom he had attained in this way, as he would have been to his own son." It should be noted that the horse was given voluntarily and because of the child rather than in compensation for the wife.

It was the opinion of those women who had lived under this system, wherein the authority of the husband was so great, that all in all it worked well. They adm[illegible] that an occasional woman 595 562

595 562 suffered injustice, but they insisted that the disciplinary power of the husband "made good wives of many women." In spite of the fact that many cases were given in illustration of harsh treatment, not a few were mentioned in which husband and wife lived happily together in an atmosphere of mutual esteem and deep affection. Coming Daylight herself, for instance, experienced what could be considered an ideal marriage with her first husband, Dressed in White.

## EXTRA-MARITAL AFFAIRS

837 Girls were instructed before marriage to expect and condone infidelity on the part of the husband. An ambivalent attitude prevailed in that a man's reputation was said to have suffered if he were known as one who was "always fooling around with other men's wives"; yet brave young men were expected to make as many conquests as possible.

There were few women who escaped their husband's suspicion at one time or another. The reasons why the suspicion was often justified were given by Singer to have been the following. "Too often young girls were given in marriage to old men for whom they did not care and to whom they never got attached; so when younger men more to their liking came along, lots of these girls gave in to them and took chances of getting caught by their husbands. But even if a woman liked her husband and he was real good to her, when she saw that he was running around with other women, she might be jealous and want to 'make her life bad' just to get even with him."

While a woman could not count on her mother, or aunt, or sister-in-law to help along her illicit love affair, in some cases a grandmother, or sister, or friend might assist her in making assignations with the lover and would do their best to shield her from her husband. It was said that others were sympathetic especially if the lover were known as a brave man. In fact there were two sets of circumstances in which public opinion was lenient almost to the point of approval, although great discretion was necessary to avoid the husband's suspicion, since he still had the right of punishing his wife if he found her out. One kind of situation concerned the woman who sent a man out to accomplish some specific

and spectacular war deed before she granted her favors to him.[9] 837
If he returned, she was supposed to keep her word, accepting him as her lover. In the other type of situation, it was taken for granted that a woman would succumb to the pleas of a man who 762
had publicly announced his intention of virtually committing suicide. Such a man, by singing the "brave-song" as he circled 533
the camp, indicated that he would seize the first opportunity thereafter to encounter the enemy but make no effort to defend 726
himself.[10]

According to a number of stories that are told, it was not uncommon 837
that a woman committed suicide when her lover failed to return from war. 762
That this actually happened, in some cases at least, is vouched for by the following factual account given by Singer. "White people, on one occasion, invited some Gros Ventres to visit them. All of the people, whose lodges were near to that of my grandmother, went, except one woman. This woman was scraping a skin when word was announced that a certain young man had been killed at war. My grandmother, noticing that the sound of scraping had stopped, thought that this woman was resting, and after a little while started over to visit her. On the way, however, she heard a shot, and when she got to that lodge she found that this woman was dead. She had first dressed herself nicely in her best clothes and had then shot herself, pulling the trigger of the gun by means of a string attached to her toe. My grandmother had suspected an affair between this woman and the young man who had lost his life at war, but she hadn't known for sure until this woman committed suicide. In those days a woman would have kept such an affair secret. (Now since women have the law to protect them from their husbands, wives just don't care and boldly run around with anybody they fancy and talk back to their husbands, and everybody knows all about it.) But anyway, that woman was a good worker,—she was working for her husband when that bad news came about the death of her lover,—and of course her husband mourned for her."

It was said that women who had been cast aside by their hus- 837

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[9] "This custom is said to have led to the death of many young men." Kroeber, 1908, p. 180. 578

[10] For further details on the "brave-song," see p. 92.

837 578 bands, and whose families were indifferent to their conduct, were easy conquests for men, but sometimes caused a great deal of trouble. A woman like that usually had more difficulty in acquiring a good husband, and was jealous if her lover refused to take her as wife, yet married some other woman. Coming Daylight had an experience with one such woman. "My husband and I were living in a lodge with his mother and her husband and his two brothers, really cousins. My husband was a very handsome man and shortly after we were married, a woman whose lover he had been, came to that lodge and tried to get him to marry her too. When I saw that she was running after him I told him: 'You ought to take that woman. I can just make my bed on the other side of the fire [with the two cousins]!' But, knowing that she was the promiscuous kind, he didn't want her and refused her. She made her bed in our lodge anyway though and kept after him, but still he wouldn't have her. His mother told him one day: 'You might just as well marry her because she is a good worker and besides she had friends among the whites, so we could all eat!' My husband got mad then and told his mother what he thought of his former sweetheart. He even threatened to go off to war again if she didn't go away. The woman was right outside the lodge and heard what they said about her. She was so furious that she rushed in and dragged me out feet first so that all my clothes went up over my head. When I got up, she grabbed at my ear and pulled off my ear-ring—you can still see where she tore the flesh. Then she ran in the lodge again and started pounding on my husband. Finally, one of those unmarried relatives, who was not as particular as my husband, told her: 'Well, take your things over to that other lodge and I will move my things over there too.' So they lived as man and wife. I never tried to hit back at that woman and I didn't even talk about her, but I got even with her in a quiet way. One night at a dance, I took my husband by the arm and told him to dance with her. When she said: 'Oh, I have no use for him now—he is old,' I said in a loud voice: 'You would change your mind quick enough if I had asked him to sleep with you!' And everybody laughed and laughed at that woman because they knew how anxious she had been to have him."

837 It was said that when virtuous women refused improper ad-

It was said that when virtuous women refused improper advances, some men overcame their resistance by threat of using love charms or witchcraft against them. There was one man, for instance, described as having been handsome, but who was said to have gotten his way with many women by intimidating them. Coming Daylight said: " One day that man approached me saying: 'If you don't let me have you, your life will be short.' I told him: 'Well, you better take a gun and finish me right now. Maybe that would make you feel good.' I called his bluff, but nothing ever happened to me." 837 [832]

Other men were said to have resorted to trickery and actually deceived women whom they could not get by approaching them openly. There was one individual, for example, a contemporary of Coming Daylight and Singer, who had a well-deserved reputation for " getting the better of women " whose husbands were away from camp. Singer told the following story as typical of the kind of thing this man did. " One certain night this man went to a lodge and crept in beside a woman whose husband was away on a war party. He whispered to her, pretending to be her husband: 'I came home ahead of the others. They don't know it.' Then he added: 'Put our little girl on the other side of the lodge.' The woman did as he told her and they laid together. After a while he asked her: 'How are the children?' But this time she remarked: 'Your voice sounds different.' He allayed her suspicions, however, by saying that he had caught a bad cold. He then quickly made his escape by claiming that he would have to get back to his comrades before they would awaken in order to avoid paying a fine should they discover he had come into camp ahead of the rest of the war party. So in the morning this woman told her mother and her mother-in-law that the war party was returning that day. She went out singing war songs so that everyone in the camp heard her. But after a while, when the war party failed to come in, the people realized that some man must have deceived her. It was later found out who he was and this man's name is used at the present time to indicate any man who tricks a woman into believing he is someone for whom she had been waiting."

There was a considerable discussion of whether or not it had been a Gros Ventre custom in the past to periodically have a public confession of chastity by women. Coming Daylight, Singer, 837 and the younger women as well, all emphatically maintained that the practice was a Piegan one and not Gros Ventre. On the other hand, The Boy claimed that it was a Gros Ventre practice in his father's time, which extends further back than the actual experience of Singer and Coming Daylight. Mary's statement throws some light on the attitudes in the very recent past. "I have heard that the Piegans did that. My mother-in-law lived among them a long time and told me what their life was like. Once a man here wanted to try that public type of confession. He told everybody: 'We are going to have a big gathering to show off some of our Gros Ventre women. Now remember that this is a sacred thing and you have to swear to it. You don't dare get up there and lie, because if you do you will have bad luck.' I went to that party, but that part of the proceedings didn't come off. Someone had said to the man who was running it: 'You don't want to start this thing because it will cause a lot of trouble.' I guess that is why the host didn't go through with it, although he had the prize—a big quarter of beef—all ready to be given to the one who could honestly make that claim."

In commenting on what Mary had said, Singer and Coming Daylight gave two reasons why this public confession of chastity could not have been a Gros Ventre custom, and would have not been feasible in their day. First, in a gathering of that kind there would have been too many relatives before whom a woman had to be "ashamed"—brothers, cousins, uncles and father; therefore if a woman could justly claim to be chaste she couldn't have gotten up in public and said so. Secondly, it would have exposed too many women; every husband whose wife could not rise to the occasion would have been embarrassed and there would have been too much suspicion and jealousy engendered.

[171] This of course does not disprove the point made by The Boy that the public confession of chastity was in the more remote past a Gros Ventre as well as a Piegan custom, but it does imply that such a ceremony was in all likelihood not held by the Gros Ventres subsequently to 1855 or thereabouts.[11]

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[11] Clark, who visited the Fort Belknap Agency for a few days in 1881 mentions, p. 198, that among other dances they have a Strong Dance for women,—intended as a support to their chastity.

# CHAPTER X

## OLD AGE AND DEATH

It is the opinion of the now aged Gros Ventres that the proportion of old persons was much greater in the past than it has been 886 since they have taken up the white man's ways; and further, that 145 the aged then retained their health and vigor to a greater degree.[1] One old woman stated that when she was young, there used to be many old people, but that they died off when there were no more buffalo. She added: "People lived to a good old age on the things [262] that the Supreme Being provided,—roots, wild vegetables and fruits, dried meats and berries. In those days, too, they drank [272] broth instead of tea and coffee. Old folks didn't lose their teeth then, although even young girls do nowadays. Their teeth eventually got worn down, but they seldom pulled them. In fact, if an old person should lose a tooth, he thought it was awful and was sure that he was ready for the grave. Furthermore, people didn't get white hair until they were ready for 'old age sleep'—very old people sleep most of the time—yet now one sees middle-aged and even younger people with gray hair like the whites have."

### STATUS AND TREATMENT OF THE AGED

It was believed that a person who had lived to a ripe old age had 888 been privileged to do so by the Supreme Being. Therefore, they [782] reasoned, if you are good to old people, these in turn will pray to the Supreme Being for your health, long life, and success. Children were instructed explicitly to be good to the aged,—to feed [867] them, to clothe them, and to help them in difficulties,—as well as to seek out those so blessed and ask for their prayers. It was

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[1] Allowance should of course be made for the fact that "old age" is a [582] relative term. When it was said that young men were urged to marry "older experienced women," this referred to a woman of perhaps twenty to twenty-five. See pp. 171–72. A woman on the northern plains was "old" at forty, according to Denig, p. 513.

It was thought well, too, to name a child after someone who had attained
888 advanced age. Thus it was that youths of 16 or 17 years of age
[551] would go out in a storm and stand before the lodge of some old
man or woman and cry, begging the prayers of that person.
Again, on a hunting party, should there be some old man along,
[431 unable to hunt, one member of the group might give a whole buf-
782] falo carcass to him; whereupon the grateful elder would offer a
spontaneous prayer on the donor's behalf. Similarly, it was not
at all unusual for successful young hunters to seek out old people
to share in some of the spoils,—just as in these later times a bottle
of whiskey was occasionally given to old persons by the young.
[782] Once in a while, too, some married man would have his wife cook
a quantity of food and publicly invite old people, one of whom, in
appreciation of this attention, would offer the expected prayer for
the long life, health and success of the host and all the members
of his household.

Dignity was, however, not necessarily an attribute of old age. With advancing years the conventions were somewhat relaxed. It was stated by one informant: " When a man had lived long enough to have participated in all the Sacred Dances, he had acquired the right to do almost as he pleased, including not having to observe so strictly the relationship taboos. It seemed to throw the bars down and he could have even more fun than ever at the expense of his enemy-friends and become still more vulgar and obscene." Relations between old women living together were not always harmonious and noisy quarreling was not unusual. Sometimes young boys played pranks on such old women, as in the following case.

888 " Two old women who were sisters shared a lodge. One day
they were in there, seated back to back, warming themselves by
522 the fire. They didn't have any clothes on and were feeling good,
scratching their skins with sticks. Two young boys peeped in.
They took a long willow and quietly heated the end of it in the
fire. When the end of the willow was glowing, they touched one
of the old women with it. She yelled at the other: ' You burned me,'
and of course the other denied it. After a little while, the boys
did the same thing to the other old woman. They heard her call
out: ' What did you do to me? You burned me!' The boys

888 522 repeated this stunt twice more, but this was too much for these old women, who then started fighting and shouting recriminations, blaming each other. The boys of course were in high glee as the old women hit each other and grunted. Finally, however, they called the daughter of one of the old women, saying: 'Come and see these old ones fighting. Try and stop them. They will kill each other.' So as the boys ran away, the younger woman restored peace."

888 [592] [887] Care of the aged devolved upon close kin. Whereas old men customarily lived directly with the households to which they were attached, old windows usually lived in lodges separate from, but located near, those of relatives who provided most of their food. To old women was often relegated the care of their grandchildren, especially of their granddaughters, whom they were supposed to train from the age of about seven until such time as they were given in marriage. The young girls in turn supplied the water and fuel for their grandmothers. In case the aged person had children of his own, he was reasonably secure. Those whose dependence was on more remote relatives were less assured of good care. The aged who had special skills which could be exercised in spite of debility, especially those who possessed "medicine power," were better off than the others.[3]

In dealing with old people it was said that much patience and forbearance were often necessary. For instance, one old woman, now deceased, was described by a relative in the following terms: "She was a hardboiled old jane, rough and tough, who didn't hesitate to tell you what she thought of things. But she had many friends and when visitors came she would swell up and be proud when they sat beside her rather than beside one of the several other old women who lived in the same place. Usually during the visit, however, she would get mad and threaten all kinds of things, and people would have to humor her. One day she really blew up and said: 'I'm going to save my relatives the job of hauling my carcass out, so I'm going out on the hills right now and lie out there and die!' So one of her relatives had to pretend to take her

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[3] Denig, pp. 576-77, states that only such old persons who possess medicine powers are exempt from the petty tricks and other annoyances to which the aged in general are subject among northern plains tribes.

888 seriously and he grabbed her by the arm and yelled: 'Come back here! What are you going to do?' The old woman was taken by surprise,—her bluff was called,—and she meekly came back."

More than one Gros Ventre used the phrase regarding old women in general that they were "great ones to pout." An example of sulking on the part of one old woman, which resulted in more than ordinarily serious consequences, is the following told by Singer. "One time when I was young, the group was about to move camp. There was an old woman whose granddaughter was looking after her, but she was 'pouting' and refused to get on either the travois or the horse. When the party was leaving, her granddaughter urged her: 'Hurry. Everybody is leaving us and it is dangerous to travel alone!' But the old woman just pouted and pouted, and finally in desperation the girl left. When they camped again, the girl kept worrying about her grandmother, so she asked a man to go back with her. They were mounted. The rest of the party waited a long time, but when they didn't return, the whole group went back to hunt for them. They found that the girl and the man had been killed and scalped, but the old woman lay dead in a sweatlodge.

"Years later they heard the details from the Assiniboine, who had swooped down on the three of them just as the girl and her companion met the old woman who was slowly following the trail on foot. They first killed the man and tried to capture the girl. When she resisted, they killed her and scalped them both. They didn't harm the old woman, but she begged them to build a sweatlodge for her and leave her there. She told them: 'Seal it up tightly. I just as much as killed my grandchild, and I will die with her.'"

In the days when the Gros Ventres were nomadic, abandonment of the ill and aged was not unknown. Sometimes it was done with great regret, when the responsible parties did not have the equipment to enable them to carry the old person along. On other occasions the old person was quite callously left to his fate. Singer recalled the following instance." On one occasion the group was moving camp, and one family went off and left an old helpless woman sitting there without so much as having prepared a shelter for her. My younger brother kept saying: 'You are leaving an old

woman! You are leaving an old woman!' Finally our mother 888
couldn't stand it any longer and, although she was not responsible for that old woman, she turned back and got the old woman to camp by letting her hang onto the travois. But we didn't have to carry her because she died shortly after that."

Takes The Bow mentioned that in the dim past, rather than to go off and leave an aged relative, the Gros Ventres used to ask some outstanding warrior to kill this old person—a father, or mother, or grandparent. This was done in order to get those who were suffering "out of their misery." The relative who took this responsibility would authorize the killer to count coup on the one whom he killed and thus score another mark of distinction for his record.[8] Other Gros Ventres were of the opinion that this type of "mercy killing" was adopted from the Blackfoot and that it was rarely carried out by the Gros Ventres, although admittedly abandonment of the aged to starvation was sometimes forced upon them.

## DEATH

The Gros Ventres valued life highly and prayed for long lives, 761
but when a person knew he was about to die, it was said that he 763
resigned himself and appreciated the efforts on the part of others
to ease his last moments. There was a desire to die surrounded by
one's family and friends who would see to it that the proper last
steps were taken. In view of this, if a man were wounded in an [727]
encounter with the enemy, every effort would be made by his companions—even at great personal risk—to get him back to his family before he would die.

When all hope for life had been abandoned, the dying person 763
was dressed in the best clothes available, his hair combed, and his face painted "as though he were going to a party." Frequently last minute instructions would be given by the dying concerning his preference as to method of final disposal. He might also include advice to his survivors, and make occasional bequests of

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[8] It is interesting to note in this connection that Cocking, 1772, p. 112, writes of the Gros Ventres: "They torture all the aged of both sexes in a most shocking and deliberate manner." The context is not clear, however, and he may have been referring to treatment of prisoners of war.

763 property.[a] Although in the following case ideal conditions did not obtain, the account as given by an old woman illustrates something of the attitudes which prevailed even after the Gros Ventres had settled down. "My husband had been ill. We were very badly off, having nothing to eat and no light, but worst of all my husband had no suitable clothes in which to pass his last moments. A friend of his fortunately came to the rescue, bringing new clothes, food, a fancy new lamp and fuel. A short time after this my husband called to me to come to him and said: 'I have lost life long ago. The only thing I have left is my eyesight. I can see, but I will be leaving you soon. Bring me the bundle my friend has given me.' I did so and as he examined the new clothing piece by piece he said: 'Now I am glad I shall have something to wear. I want you to listen carefully. I don't want you to mourn—we have too many children for that, and they must be cared for. Don't go to your relatives nor to mine. We have been very poor since I have been sick and none of them has even come to see us. I want you to go straight to the home of this man who has given me these clothes. Now I am ready to go.' After my husband [587] died, I did just as he had requested. In spite of all the gossip, I married that man. People were talking about me because that man had at one time been married to a wife of my mother's brother."

764 If circumstances did not permit arrangements to be made before death, as soon as possible after death the corpse was washed and dressed. This office was performed preferably by friends of the [572] deceased since it was not expected of near relatives because "they felt too bad." Should the deceased not own a proper outfit, one was usually somehow provided. Coming Daylight remembered that one time when a small boy was drowned, the child's distracted mother came running to her lodge saying: "I am very poor and my little boy has no good clothes to wear. Will you let me have your little boy's clothes?" Coming Daylight felt so sorry for this woman that she let her have her own son's nicely beaded clothes and moccasins, and gave her a blanket as well. After the body was dressed, they laid it on this blanket in the place of honor at the back of the parents' lodge.

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[a] Kroeber, 1908, p. 180, notes that "A man often disposed of his property before death."

764 [729] [784] Another instance was given by The Boy regarding his father. "Lame Bull was on a buffalo-hunting party when his brother-in-law was killed during an encounter with the enemy. They brought the body as it was back to camp, where it lay for quite a while. Lame Bull finally went to his tipi and got leggings and a shirt of his own, although he was Flat Pipe Keeper at the time and it was taboo for one holding this office to give his clothes to the dead. Nevertheless Lame Bull removed the bloody clothes from the body of his brother-in-law, washed the body and dressed it in his own clothes. He paid for this kindness, however, because for nine years thereafter he had such pains in his legs he was not able to walk,—this being the punishment he suffered for breaking the rules by which the Keeper of a sacred pipe should live."

Before finally disposing of the body "something very expensive," like a big silk handkerchief, was placed over the face. The whole body, including the head, was then wrapped securely in a blanket or robe and tied "like a mummy." The body was placed on a stretcher and put in a forked tree, if practicable, the head to the setting sun. Otherwise the corpse might be laid on a knoll and a structure like a sweatlodge built over it to protect it from the wild beasts; or it might be laid in the cleft of a cliff and covered with rocks.[8] 766 For a particularly prominent man, however, his own lodge might serve as his last resting place. In that case holes would be dug in which the lodge-poles were placed, in order that the structure would be more permanent. The body was laid in the lodge amidst rich furnishings. The ears of the lodge were closed, the cover pegged down, and the whole secured as well as possible. This was done, for instance, for The Boy's maternal grandfather and for one of his maternal uncles. Al Chandler remembers that when he himself was a small boy upon the death of his uncle, Rises Again, the body was placed on a bedstead in a big lodge erected about a half-mile from his house.

764 [765 731] Even in times of great stress, such as in a smallpox epidemic when so many died that "the trees along the Milk River were just loaded with bodies," as much care as possible was taken to place the bodies properly in their last resting place. When there was no more space on the trees, a large number of bodies were put in a

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[8] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 181.

764 lodge at some little distance from the camp. As exceptions to the rule, however, Coming Daylight told of a couple of instances which came within her experience in the first epidemic which she remembers. One case concerned a man who simply left the body of one of his wives where she had fallen and Coming Daylight [766 731] came across the bones of that woman stripped of flesh by wild animals during the night. The other case was that of a man who mercilessly covered with stones the body of his infected sister, in spite of the fact that she was still alive.

[178] Only in relatively recent times has burial in the ground been common. This is illustrated by the comments of Coming Daylight in connection with a long story about a visit to a relative who was married to a white trader. "On this occasion my father's father was killed and scalped by the Piegan just outside of the white man's stockade. The white men brought in the body. He had been scalped and was bloody all over. These whites washed him, bound up his head, and dressed his body in their own clothes,—even to putting shoes on his feet. We thought that peculiar and some of our relatives wanted instead to put on him the best pair of beaded moccasins we had. My father said, however, that he wouldn't interfere as long as they were fixing him up in their way. So the whites buried him just like they do their own. The Gros Ventres never did that—they put the corpse up high somewhere, usually in a tree. We thought it was bad enough for our relatives to die, much less covering them up with earth. My maternal grandmother, who was there at the time, said: 'When I leave you, I don't want you to mourn for me because I have lived to be just as old as anyone should be. All I ask is that you see to it that I am fixed up the right way. Don't let them dig any hole for me. I want you to lay me up in a cliff in a nice quiet place, just make a bed for me and lay me there.' When she died, that is just what was done for her."

It was customary, prior to the time that the Gros Ventres settled down, to place some of the personal belongings of the deceased with the body.[6] When a beloved son died, for instance, his favorite horse might be taken along and killed at the place where the body was laid away. Similarly a minor pipe might have been buried with its owner. For a woman, her clothing, and sometimes even her pots and pans, were put with her body. It was stated explicitly, however, that food was never placed with the body by the Gros Ventres, although it was recognized that the Assiniboine did so. 764

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[6] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 180.

A widow would burn the things of her husband which were not placed with his body nor taken by his relatives. She would then be smudged with sage and, should she have kissed the corpse, her mouth was smudged four times and she was made to spit each time. 768 783

These practices were seemingly tied up with two beliefs,—the first being that if objects were not placed with the body, the deceased would return to look for the things valued in life; the second, that the recently deceased try to lure the living to join them. The first point was explained by Mary, whose mother had told her: "Everyone likes his own things and some hate to leave them when they die. That is why we used to put personal belongings with the corpse. It might be that there is some one thing that a person wants which has been 'left behind,' so he will come back to seek it. Sometimes when you are alone you might hear a rattling of the dishes or a whistling sound, and you would know that it was some loved one who had died and who was looking for something." 764 775

As proof of the second point, the following experience was offered by Singer. "When I was ill during a smallpox epidemic, I had a dream. I dreamed that my sister, who had died in this same epidemic, appeared to me and said: 'Our mother wants you. Come with me.' My father, who was actually nursing me, seemed to be standing to one side. He told my sister: 'You have had no pity on us. You didn't fight for life. What are you coming after her for? You go by yourself.' But pretty soon my sister came again and said: 'Now this time I want you to come because our mother wants you.' So I agreed: 'All right. I will go with you.' My sister took me to a shabby-looking little old lodge and I didn't feel right about going in there but I thought: 'Well, to please them I will look in there anyway.' There was someone there in bed and my sister was toward the back of the lodge and my mother was on the other side. My mother told me: 'Here, sit by your sister.' She 775 787

787 775 began to dig around behind her bedding and brought out a bowl such as that in which buffalo chips are pounded into powder. She said: 'Here. I want you to eat this.' It didn't look good to me and I just kind of felt it with my fingers. Instead of having sat by my sister as my mother had directed, I had remained by the door, because I felt kind of scared in some way. So I told them: 'Wait. I guess I will go out a minute. I will be right back.' But I got out of there and ran home as fast as I could go—back to my own bed, back to myself. If I had eaten what they had given me that would have been the last of me! After this dream I got well."

## MOURNING

765 152 As soon as word was circulated that someone had died, all relatives of that person, especially the women, were supposed to gather as soon as possible to cry and mourn for the deceased. Very close kin were expected to show their sorrow at the death of a loved one not only by crying and wailing, but also by casting off their good clothes and donning old ones,—robes, for instance, consisting of pieces of old discarded lodge covers, or ordinary robes that were rough and worn,—and by cutting the hair.[7] [832] [302] This latter was truly a great sacrifice, for to the Gros Ventres one of the chief criteria of beauty, in men and women alike, was extreme length of hair. The hair of younger children in a family was spared, even at the death of parents, but should, say, a father die, the hair of the older daughters was shorn, though not cut so short as that of the widow. [887] An elderly woman was usually called upon to do the cutting and the widow, guided by the strength of her emotional reaction, would indicate how short she wished her hair to be. It was said that some widows would leave their hair relatively long, just free of the shoulders, while others "when they felt too badly, had all their hair cut off, almost as men now wear their hair."

Close kin were accustomed to further show grief by going off to the hills and fasting, crying aloud as they wandered about alone, and sleeping out without shelter. A parent would have done so at the loss of a son, one spouse at the death of the other, or a sister for her deceased brother. Such mourners would stay out until someone went after them and talked to them and persuaded them to eat and drink some water. 765 152

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[7] For this and other practices in mourning, see Kroeber, 1908, p. 181.

The most extravagant expressions of grief were expected on the part of close relatives of men killed at war. It was under such circumstances that the mourners tore off their clothes and gashed [304] their arms and legs. The blood was not washed off and the wounds were allowed to fester, often leaving ugly scars. It was maintained that in mourning the Gros Ventres did not cut off fingers,—that was done only in fulfilment of a vow.

If a brave young man were killed by the enemy, his parents [762] went even further in the expression of their grief, and sometimes had to be restrained from committing suicide. The father could show additional sorrow by cutting the manes and tails of his son's horses, which he then led about as he wandered on the hills for four days and nights, crying and mourning. The following case 765 illustrates the behavior of an elder brother in mourning for a 787 younger one, but may be somewhat exceptional in that the former felt responsible for the latter's death.

"Little Man, also known as Deafie, was on his way home with his younger brother. They had been on a friendly visit to the Crow. There were others in the party and one evening while they were camped, the younger brother had a dream. The next morning he told them: 'I had a bad dream. I dreamed I got killed.' One of the older men said: 'All right. We will stop here awhile so we can make a sweat-lodge and we will smudge.' (That is what they did when they wanted to prevent something bad from happening.) But Little Man told them that, although the rest of them might believe in dreams, he did not, and he insisted that they move on. The old man couldn't say anything more. As they were going along that same day, Little Man was scouting ahead and sighted the enemy. The Gros Ventre party separated, Little Man going with one group, his brother with the other. The brother happened to go right into the midst of the Assiniboine and was killed. The others heard the shots, but when they got there, Little Man found his brother lying dead. He then tore off all his clothes and would have committed suicide by dashing singlehanded after the enemy had not his brother-in-law grabbed him and held him back. When they got home, Little Man felt so badly that he cut off his beautiful

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787

long hair. All this happened just a year before he married Coming Daylight."

It was said that not infrequently those out mourning on the hills experienced visions of supernatural significance. It seemed that women were especially favored at times like that since they never went out in quest of power as did men. When Lame Bull's wife was mourning for her younger brother after he was killed at war, "someone" came to her and taught her a special song which she should sing when the party returned from avenging his death. Coming Daylight, when crying out on the hills after one of her sons died, was "shown a cane" which she took to mean that she would live to be an old woman. Another of her visions is given in detail as it involves a substitution for the more violent expressions of grief.

"When I was out in the hills after my favorite son died, I dreamed that I was in a big lodge full of people and I was sitting right by the door. At the back of this lodge was a big pile of tobacco mixture and a pipe lying alongside. The owner of the lodge, after he filled the pipe, got up and walked toward me. I was scared, because I didn't smoke. This one told me: 'Look at these people.' I did so and noticed that many of them had their hair cut and that their bodies were bleeding. Then he said: 'That kind of mourning is in the past. Nowadays your only consolation is in smoking this pipe.' He gave me the pipe and I started to smoke. I smoked until the tobacco was finished, emptied the pipe and put it down. Then the owner of the lodge told the other people there: 'Go ahead.' All the people in there took turns coming up to me, each rubbing red paint on his hands and painting me, starting at the top of my head and proceeding right down to the tip of my moccasins. I was facing the door and when the last one finished, the man told me: 'Now go home. Don't ever go on the hills and mourn again. But always smoke if you want to.'

"That was my dream. When I got home I sat down and started to cry. When my husband asked me what was the matter, I told him that I wanted a smoke, related my dream to him. He said: 'I will take you to your sister.' When we got to her house my husband said to her: 'Your sister is crying for a smoke.' My sister laughed and said: 'Well, I have no pinto ponies to give her!

I have always heard her say that she would never smoke, even if 765
someone gave her a pinto pony.' But when my husband told her 787
about my dream, she said: 'Oh. It is great to have a dream like that. Many of us fast and pray and we are never shown anything!' So she fixed a smoke for me and gave it to me. I have been smoking ever since."

Whenever close relatives happened to be in the vicinity where 765
lay the remains of one of their number, some at least went there to cry. Coming Daylight remarked that she remembers well where each and every one of her relatives had been "left," and feels the country, over which the Gros Ventres had control in the 1860's and 1870's, to be "fenced in" by their remains.

At present when a Gros Ventre dies, no "feasting and smoking" 765
is done for four days thereafter. If, however, an important date 178
has been set and it is seriously inconvenient to postpone a big gathering, at least one of the chief mourners would be invited "too soon," and has no choice but to accept. Before eating, the host or someone in his place "talked" to the mourner and commanded him to cease mourning, to paint his face, and henceforth to join in all amusements, dances, and social affairs of the people.

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[P.208 contains no Text]

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## PLATES

142 The original photograph of Plate 1 was taken in 1887 and
291 belongs to The Boy. Shown in it are Lame Bull, The Boy's
301 father, and Crow Bull, maternal uncle of Coming Daylight. Both
302 of these men were born around 1825 and their personal experiences were often referred to by our informants as we took down the record of the old way of life. Each had been Keeper of the sacred Flat Pipe.

115 The photographs composing Plate 2, except for the one of The
133 Boy, were taken in 1940 by Dr. Karl F. Herzfeld. The first three
142 show the nature of the country around Hays on the Fort Belknap
291 Reservation; the other three show some of our informants and
292 interpreters whose biographical sketches follow.

531 In Plate 3, the shield and war medicines of Bull Lodge, father
797 of our informant, Garter Snake, represent only a few of the specimens of Gros Ventre culture collected in 1937 by Mr.
778 Richard Pohrt, of Flint, Michigan.
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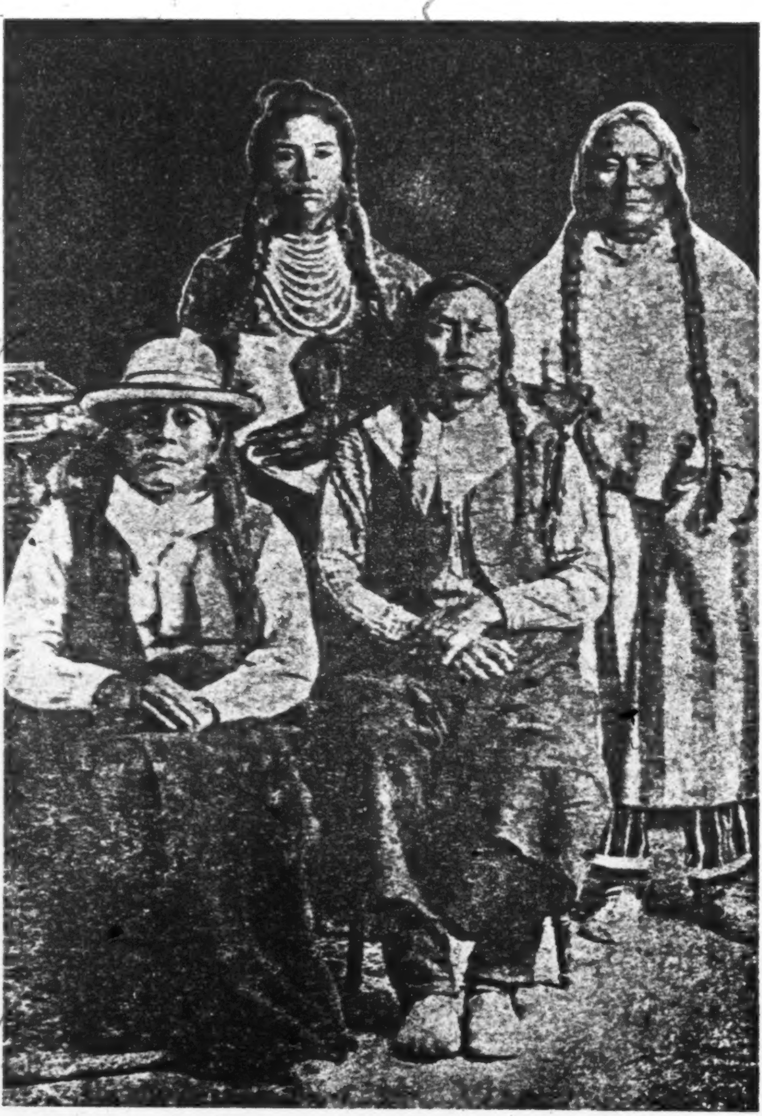

PLATE I

LEFT TO RIGHT: LAME BULL, BIRD SITTING, BLACK BIRD AND CROW BULL

(Photo by Dan Dutro, Fort Benton, Montana, 1887)

[p. 212 (A)]

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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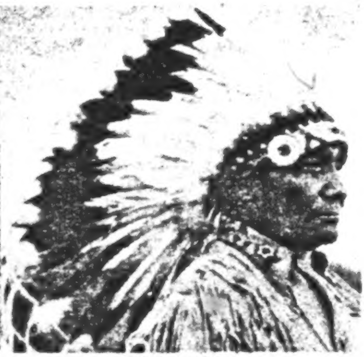
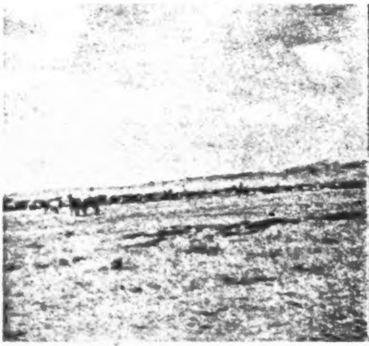
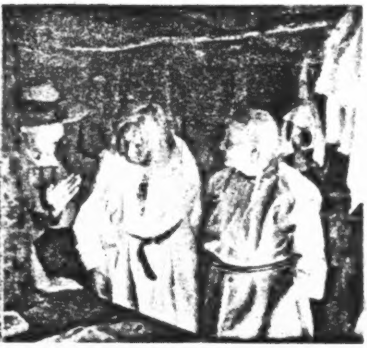
IN THE LITTLE ROCKIES



THE BOY

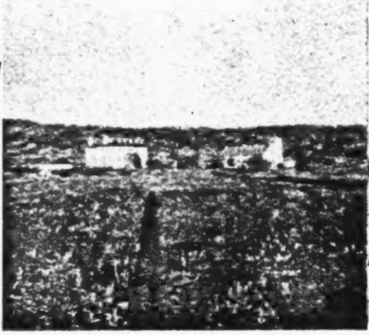


PLAINS NEAR HAYS

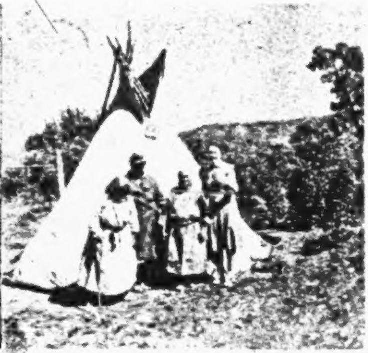


MARY, SINGER, AND COMING DAYLIGHT

[342]
[797]



ST. PAUL'S MISSION AND SCHOOL



COMING DAYLIGHT'S TIPI

PLATE II

[p. 212 (B)]

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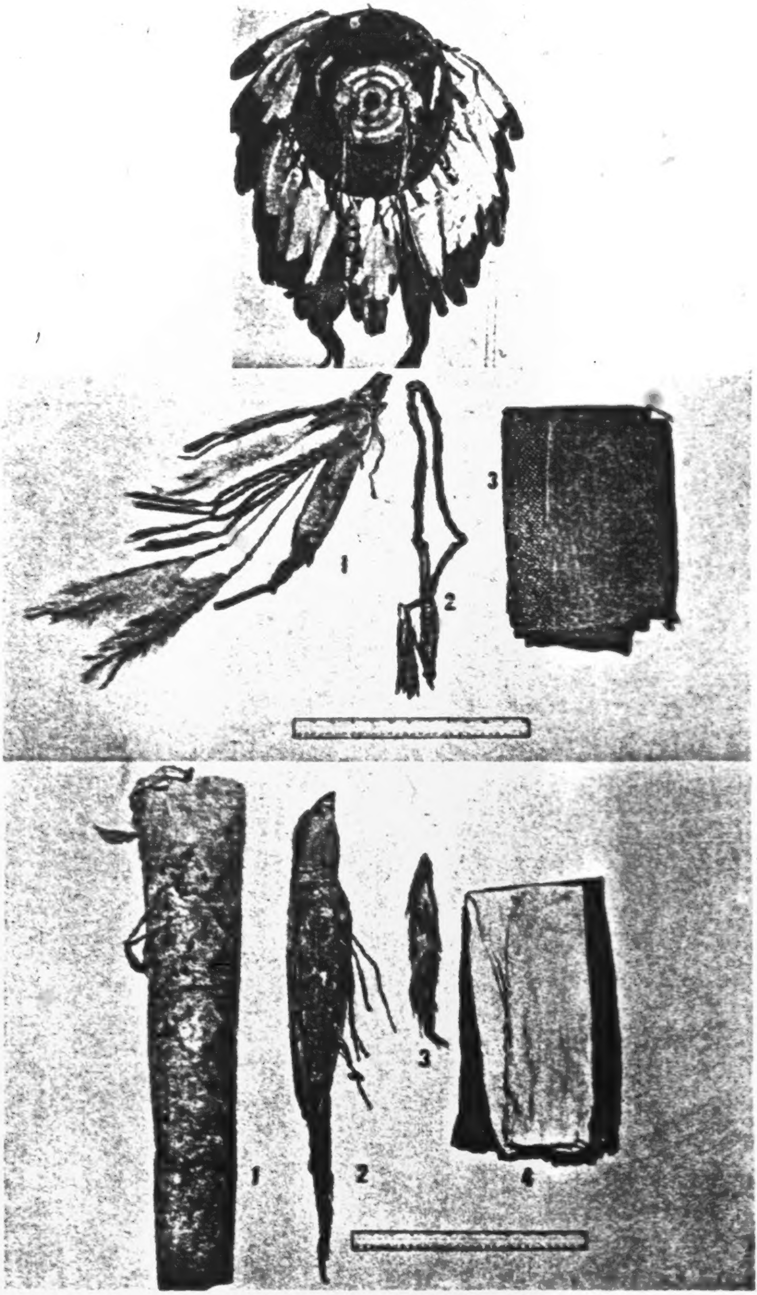

PLATE III

SHIELD AND WAR MEDICINES MADE
AND USED BY BULL LODGE

[p. 212(C)]

# APPENDIX

## THE CHIEF INFORMANTS

*The Boy* gave the greater bulk of information on religious and political aspects of Gros Ventre culture. He was born in 1870, one of the younger sons of Lame Bull (b. ca. 1825—d. 1908), and grandson of Crow Moccasin (whose other name was Bird Chief, b. ca. 1795—d. 1865), a signer of the 1855 Treaty. When The Boy was a very young child his father, a prominent warrior and well-to-do man, became Keeper of one of the sacred pipes—the Flat Pipe. As a boy and young man, The Boy, who was very much interested in the ceremonial and other aspects of his culture, spent as much time as possible with his father and his father's friends, listening to their discussions. In private he questioned his father repeatedly and thus he acquired a wide and deep knowledge of the Gros Ventre way of life as it was before the buffalo disappeared. Although he did well during the one year of boarding school he had at St. Peter's, he was very unhappy there, and did not enter the newly opened Mission School of St. Paul's although his father wished him to do so. He is an extremely intelligent man with marked philosophical trend of mind. In spite of his unwillingness to speak English, he became a natural leader among the Gros Ventres and served his people in many different capacities. At present he is the "grand old man" of the Gros Ventres and is appealed to when any question regarding the past arises. His statement in regard to his knowledge of the 1855 Treaty, for instance, is acknowledged as weighty evidence in the present Gros Ventre claims against the Government which are now awaiting settlement. Without The Boy's drive to have the old way of life recorded, this work could not have been accomplished.

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*Thick* (b. ca. 1870—d. 1951) was well-versed in the old culture. It was his father who was responsible for putting on the last Sacrifice Dance (Sun Dance) held by the Gros Ventres in 1884. Thick's maternal uncle took advantage of his prerogative to raise his sister's children and removed Thick from his parental home at about the age of seven and kept him under supervision until Thick was a young man. Compared to his elder brother, Horse Capture, Thick was somewhat shy and retiring, entering into the public social life of the Gros Ventres only after his brother finally persuaded him to do so. A considerable amount of the material given to Dr. Cooper was related by The Boy in Thick's presence, and Thick either agreed with what had been said, or, if he disagreed, he did not hesitate to speak up. Since he and The Boy were brothers-in-law and maintained their respectful relationship, there were a number of topics which they could not discuss in each other's presence. Consequently there were many occasions when Thick worked independently of The Boy, both with Father Cooper and with me. Thick never attended school, and, like The Boy, did not speak English.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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*Charles Buckman* (b. ca. 1875—d. 1949), whose nickname was John, was brought up by his mother's people. He had considerable knowledge of the old way of life and his childhood training and experience remained vivid in his memory in spite of the fact that he was educated at the boarding school at St. Paul's Mission on the Reservation. He enjoyed reading the newspapers and listening to the radio and was equally interested in discussing the old way of life of the Gros Ventres and the latest developments in world politics. His services as interpreter and informant were utilized especially in many of the sessions that Dr. Cooper had jointly with Thick and The Boy. Thick found him an especially congenial interpreter. He was prominent in the public life of the Reservation and held several different offices.

*Thomas Main* (b. 1890) made a very extensive contribution to the record of Gros Ventre way of life in his capacity as chief interpreter. He, like Charles Buckman, was a half-orphan and was raised by his mother's people. The Boy is his maternal uncle and has exerted a considerable influence on Tom. His knowledge of the old way of life comes, too, through his old "grandmothers" for whom as a child he ran errands and who rewarded him by long stories of the "old times." He was educated at St. Paul's Mission School and has always been a great reader—for years he has kept in touch with current developments not only through the usual media, but also through daily reading of the Congressional Record. His unusually good command of English, coupled with a real linguistic sense, makes him an ideal interpreter. He has been extremely patient with our efforts to take down Gros Ventre texts, and was never too hurried to explain the metaphorical expressions in which the Gros Ventre language abounds. He has taken an active part in tribal affairs and is often selected as spokesman for the Gros Ventres at the local, state, and national levels.

*Al Chandler* (b. ca. 1870) gave valuable information, especially in view of the fact that his relatives participated more fully in the rites connected with the Feathered Pipe rather than with those of the Flat Pipe. This helped very much to round out the picture of ceremonial aspects of Gros Ventre life. He was educated at St. Paul's Mission School and, like Tom Main, was able to convey in English some of the finer nuances of the Gros Ventre language. Ill health prevented his giving us as many interviews as we should have liked to have had with him.

*Coming Daylight* (b. 1854—d. 1949) was also known by another of her names, Taken A Prisoner, and her childhood nickname had been Yellow Hair. In spite of her advanced age in 1940, she was a vigorous old woman in full possession of her faculties and had her own house independently of any of her many relatives. She maintained throughout the years her reputation for industry, generosity and hospitality and was highly respected. She was very much interested in the taking of the record of the old way of life and gave most freely of her personal experiences, and referred as well to what she had heard from her uncle, her grandmother and other older people whose experiences extended further into the past than her own. She had been orphaned at an early age and was brought up by a strict old grandmother under the protection of her mother's brother, Crow Bull, (b. ca. 1825—d. 1887) a prosperous and prominent warrior, who for a number of years was Keeper of the Flat Pipe. She was married as a child-bride to Dressed in White, whom she loved and respected and who later also acquired as wife her younger sister. She was still a young woman when her husband died. Her following two marriages were each of short duration, but with her next husband, Little Man, she lived many years until she was again widowed. It was during this marriage that the drastic change in Gros Ventre culture occurred with the disappearance of the buffalo. Her last husband, Warrior, pre-deceased her by many years. By 1945 her health had begun to fail although her memory was still good. In 1948, however, she was very ill and was not able to work. To Coming Daylight we owe the bulk of the material on the life cycle and the woman's point of view on social and religious activities. 115 159

*Singer* (b. ca. 1855—d. 1947) was often present when her friend, Coming Daylight, was talking about the old ways of doing things. On these occasions as well as when she was interviewed alone, she volunteered a great deal of information independently. Her lot had not been as fortunate as that of Coming Daylight. Her first marriage at the age of ten or eleven was to join her sister as co-wife. She was soon sent home to her father and her next marriage, which lasted for some time, was an unhappy one. She was mistreated by the senior wife, who was not related to her, and their husband not only permitted this but was cruel to her himself. Her next two marriages~~,~~ first to Iron Bucket and later to Ax Handle, turned out more successfully. In her old age she married her last husband, Sleeping Bear, whom she outlived by some years. She seems to have been less inclined towards domesticity than was Coming Daylight, and enjoyed to the full such activities as gambling, counting coups, and rough and tumble games and jests with her brothers-in-law and her enemy-friends.

*Garter Snake* (b. ca. 1860) has been blind for a number of years and consequently was not able to enter into the giving of the record with the same spirit and interest as either Coming Daylight or Singer. Nevertheless she gave valuable information. She is the daughter of Bull Lodge, (b. ca. 1825—d. ca. 1900?) who had been not only Keeper of the sacred Feathered Pipe but also was a famous medicine man. She had been selected as Pipe Child at the time her father became Keeper and thus remained in the same lodge as her parents while the other children, including her brother, Otter Robe, were sent to live with relatives. Although Garter Snake volunteered practically no information on her personal experiences, except those of early childhood, she gave a considerable amount of material and independently corroborated a number of points which had been given by others. She is at present the wife of Jim Shortman.

*Cora Chandler*, late wife of Al Chandler, referred to above, acted as interpreter for Coming Daylight and Singer in 1940. She attended St. Paul's School but was raised by relatives who spoke only Gros Ventre. In many friendly chats with me she elaborated upon various topics which had been

115 discussed by the old women during our regular sessions, drawing on her knowledge of the old way of life she had acquired from her mother and 159 other old women she had known. Not infrequently she referred to the contrast between the type of behavior that had been expected of her and that which is characteristic of the younger generation today.

*Mary Ereaux*, at present living off the Reservation at Dodson, was also an interpreter for the oldest informants in 1940. Like Cora, she too kindly supplemented their information from what she had seen and heard in her youth among relatives who conserved the old ways. She volunteered many comments on the change of culture she is witnessing and thus threw much light on the past.

*Mathilda Cuts The Rope* interpreted for the two oldest women in 1945. Her mother, though younger than Coming Daylight, had been very friendly with the latter and Mathilda was able to add some information on her own regarding social customs of former times.

*Mae Main*, wife of Thomas Main, like other women of her age, attended school but was brought up among conservative relatives. In 1945 and in 1946 she read those portions of the preliminary draft of this manuscript which dealt with the life cycle and informally gave additional valuable information which has subsequently been incorporated.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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